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METHODISTS

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WE METHODISTS

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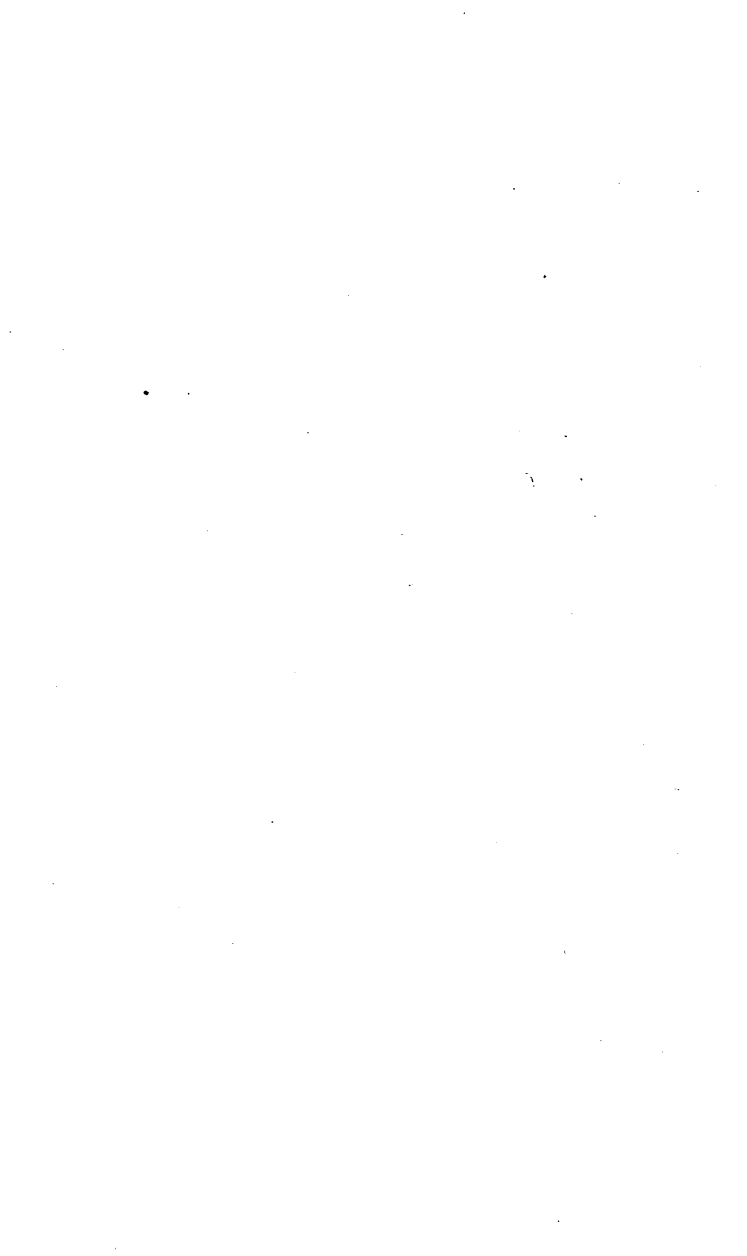


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FOREWORD

THOSE who were privileged to attend the closing night of the Uniting Conference will never forget that hour. "The Methodists are one people," Professor Garver had written, only a few weeks before, in a most illuminating and readable narrative. "The Methodists are one people," had been the refrain that had sung itself into the hearts of the nine hundred delegates from all over the world who gathered in Kansas City. *The Methodists Are One People*, defined the spirit in which the constitution of the new Church was written and her polity defined. "The Methodists Are One People" was the burden of the keynote address with which Bishop Edwin Holt Hughes even surpassed his own high standard of impassioned eloquence on that last evening when the solemn "Declaration of Union" was made. No one who was present can ever forget the tense moment of waiting when Bishop John M. Moore put the negative on the final vote, "Is there anyone opposed." There was something akin to the ecstasy of the high moment in a deeply stirring revival, when, like an electric current, the announcement thrilled the immense throng of Methodists who filled the auditorium, "No one stands!" After that there was only one thing appropriate. It was "the Hallelujah Chorus."

The uniting of Methodism holds in its grasp tremendous possibilities. It is, at the same time, fraught with grave dangers. If we become enamored of our bigness and rest back upon our laurels content to congratulate ourselves upon the splendid achievement of Unification, it may prove more of a liability than asset. If we become absorbed in admiration and in the manipulation of the new ecclesiastical mechanisms we have created, we may have a good deal of motion and commotion and little progress. If, however, we discover in our united fellow-

ship the inspiration and challenge for a general advance; if we realize all that is implied in the creation of a new and tremendously effective instrument for the use of the Spirit of God; if out of the renewal of our loyalty at the fountain of inspiration, we march forward with fresh zest and courage to face the difficult and dangerous duties of Christlike living today, then, in very truth, we may say, "The dawn is breaking and the future is radiant with hope and promise."

Clearly, we need to become acquainted with each other. We need to know and understand this new Church of which we are a part. We need to refresh our understanding of the nature of the enterprise of the Christian Church and the character of the task that is before us. It is with this thought in mind that the following chapters have been written. Here is a guide that may be followed by classes of young people and adults in the church school, by groups meeting on midweek nights, or upon other occasions. It is suggested that along with this volume the leader of the group should have a copy of the new *Discipline* of The Methodist Church. No attempt has been made in these chapters to describe in detail the structure of the new Church. That can be found in the *Discipline*. Rather, the author has sought to emphasize the values that are involved and suggest the character of the spirit and the objectives of our Methodist fellowship.

C. E. S.

Denver, Colorado
June 20, 1939

I

THE FRUIT OF THE EVANGELICAL REVIVAL

DR. GEORGE CROFT CELL used to say to his classes in Boston University School of Theology that he liked to think of John Wesley as standing on the shoulders of Martin Luther, just as Martin Luther stood on the shoulders of the apostle Paul. Thus, graphically, did he attempt to picture the spiritual lineage of the people called Methodists. We Methodists cherish the conviction that we come of the main stream of the gospel of our Lord. Our witness has been the witness of the essential gospel. It is a witness that we share with all who love and reverence our Lord Jesus Christ. Methodism, as a distinct movement within the body of the Church of Christ, was directly the fruit of a religious awakening which began in England a little before the middle of the eighteenth century, under the evangelistic preaching of John and Charles Wesley and those who labored with them. It was a religious awakening that ultimately stirred the old Established Church profoundly and carried forward toward a more complete realization the aims and spirit of the Reformation. There is no doubt about it that ultimately it came to be one of the most vitally creative influences in English society, effecting a radical reformation, both of manners and customs, and of economic and political institutions. That it ultimately resulted in the organization of new ecclesiastical organizations, both in England and in America, was an accident of circumstance. We Methodists are the fruit of the Evangelical Revival.

THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE WESLEYAN REVIVAL

We have often said that Methodism was born at Aldersgate. It might be even more true to trace our ancestry

back to the rectory of Epworth in which John Wesley was born and reared. His mother, Susanna Wesley, was one of the most remarkable women of her generation. Her father, the Rev. Samuel Annesley, was one of the leading dissenting ministers of his time. Both Susanna and Samuel Wesley, the parents of John and Charles, after being nurtured through childhood in Dissenting homes, returned to communion with the Established Church, as a matter of reasoned conviction. This sturdy moral fiber was wrought into the constitution of their son, John. While many today would reckon the discipline of the Epworth rectory as unpedagogically severe, it unquestionably produced, in the three sons of the family, an exceptionally fine quality of Christian character. Their mother watched, with eager interest, every step of the growth and development of her gifted sons. In more than one crisis, in the early years of the Methodist societies, her exceptional common sense and good advice helped John Wesley meet emergencies and make decisions that have proved eminently wise, in the light of later history. We Methodists ought never to forget the profound influence of a devout Christian home which became one of the most significant factors in preparing the way for the religious awakening out of which Methodism came.

John Wesley had been, from earliest boyhood, of a serious turn of mind. While he was an undergraduate at Oxford University, through the combined influence of an attractive and gifted young woman, his first sweetheart; and the reading of four books, which have found their place among the devotional classics of Christian literature, he was awakened to a sense of his own spiritual need. From that time until he died he was to make religion the primary business of his life. He began to keep a diary, which later he was to expand for publication as his *Journal*. In this diary he kept up a searching, intimate conversation with himself. For a long time the answers, that his incorruptibly honest conscience compelled him to

give to his questions concerning his spiritual progress, were discouragingly disappointing.

He worked out a rigorous regimen of personal spiritual discipline, and drove himself inexorably to the cultivation of the spiritual life. He united with a group of other similarly serious-minded Oxford students, in what was variously called "The Holy Club" and "The Methodists," to seek, through mutual counsel and co-operation, both in the study of religion, and in practical Christian service, to help each other attain a higher type of Christian experience. Shortly before his father's death he accepted an appointment from Governor Oglethorpe as chaplain of the new colony of Georgia, and missionary to the Indians. His experience in Georgia proved to be both discouraging and humiliating. It served, however, both to sharpen his sense of spiritual need and to clear the way to his recognition that mere activity alone could never prove the way of spiritual emancipation. While we may recognize the inadequacies of any merely formal program of spiritual discipline, We Methodists ought never to miss the point of the lesson John Wesley learned, of the value of order and method in the practice of religion.

On his voyage out to Georgia, John Wesley met a party of Moravian immigrants. He was deeply impressed by their lack of fear in a storm which proved so severe as to terrify the most seasoned sailors. Evidently, these simple, earnest Christians possessed an inner resource of faith which he himself had not yet discovered. After his return to England he made the acquaintance of Peter Böhler, who became, for a few months, during the critical period of his religious awakening, his father confessor. Through this acquaintance he was led to a rediscovery of the Pauline and Lutheran doctrine of "salvation by faith." Under the urgent exhortation of Peter Böhler, this theme became the central message of his preaching, even before he came to the decisive hour at Aldersgate. The crisis

in his experience lasted over a period of several weeks. It came to its dramatic culmination on the 24th of May, 1738. That morning, when he opened his Bible, he found in the words, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God," a promise that he might be nearing the goal. In the afternoon he was profoundly moved, as he attended a service in Saint Paul's cathedral, and heard the choir sing a setting of the one hundred thirtieth psalm: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord." That evening he went, "very unwillingly," as he wrote in his *Journal*, to a prayer meeting in Aldersgate Street, London. The leader that evening, probably a layman, read a part of Martin Luther's introduction to the Epistle to the Romans, in which the reformer sought to describe the change wrought in the human soul who accepts the mercy of God through faith in Christ. There "at a little before nine" his burdened soul found release.

Whatever terminology we may prefer to use in describing it, Aldersgate marked for the founder of Methodism a genuine religious awakening. It came as a deeply moving emotional crisis that resulted in a new and significant integration of his whole personality upon a distinctly higher spiritual level. He went out from that prayer meeting possessed of an inner peace that he had not known before. He went out with a confident assurance that he himself had experienced the grace and the mercy of God, an assurance that it became the ruling passion of his life to share with everyone whom he could reach. He went out with a new commitment to the proclamation of this Christian evangel, that was to brush aside all lesser qualms of conventionality and convenience, and drive him relentlessly and joyously, for more than half a century, to carry the "Good News" of God's forgiving grace to all the discouraged and spiritually destitute throughout the United Kingdom. This was, indeed, the spiritual birthplace of Methodism.

THE BEGINNINGS OF METHODISM

The final impetus that sent John Wesley out upon his career as an itinerant evangelist came through the opportunity of his friend George Whitefield. Whitefield had come up to Oxford a little later than Wesley and had become a member of the "Holy Club." He had started for Georgia just as Wesley was returning to England. During his first, relatively brief, visit to America, he had organized an orphanage in Georgia and hastened back to England to solicit funds for its support. When, like his friends the Wesleys, he found the pulpits of the Established Church closed against his enthusiastic evangelistic preaching, he turned to the streets and open fields. He was one of the most brilliant and persuasive preachers in Christian history. Everywhere he went great crowds thronged to hear him. The miners in Cornwall, in the neighborhood of the city of Bristol, offered a hitherto sadly neglected and unusually responsive field for his ministry. When the time came for him to return to Georgia, he wrote to Wesley imploring him to come down to Bristol and take up the work that he had begun in that vicinity.

When John Wesley reached Bristol, and learned that Whitefield had been preaching in the open air, he was very much disturbed. It did not seem to him that it was at all the proper thing to do. The proper place to preach was in a church. But the churches were all closed against him. If he was to preach at all, it would have to be in the open air. While he was debating the matter he recollected the story of the "Sermon on the Mount," and it occurred to him that that was a pretty good example of open-air preaching. Then, after he had gone with Whitefield to a natural open-air amphitheater near the mouth of a mine, where he heard his friend preach to a great throng of people, Wesley was ready himself to make the venture. Next day he likewise stood in the open air and preached.

For more than fifty years the greater part of his preaching was to be under similarly unconventional circumstances. We Methodists ought never to lose that sense of the urgency of the evangel which overrode all superficial barriers of conventionality and precedent, in its imperious commitment to an evangelistic ministry.

It was a fortunate circumstance that led George Whitefield to send for his friend to take over the work in Bristol. While Whitefield was probably the more brilliant and emotionally moving preacher of the two, John Wesley had a remarkable genius for organization and practical administration that made him the foremost executive of his generation. The pattern for the organization of the Methodist societies was ready to hand. For a good many years there had been forming, sometimes within the fellowship of the Established Church, and sometimes among those who were not regular communicants of the Church of England, a variety of religious societies. The Moravians, who had proved so helpful to Wesley during the period of his spiritual crisis, were organized in societies of this sort. It was about the time that he received Whitefield's call for help in Bristol that the first Methodist society was organized in London. Those of us who have read our *Discipline* are familiar with the description of the rise of the "United Society" which it carries in the introductory historical statement.

The second step in the development of our Methodist polity came at Bristol. Since the Established Church had closed its doors upon John Wesley and his followers, they had to seek some other place in which to hold the meetings of the Methodist societies. It soon became impracticable to continue to meet in private homes. The societies became too large. First, they rented a vacant building. Then Wesley bought a lot and borrowed the funds to erect a meetinghouse, upon his own personal security. This became known as "The New Room" at Bristol, and continues to bear that name to the present day. The

society wrestled for a time with the problem how they were to raise the funds to clear the debt. Finally, at the suggestion of one of their number, they divided the society up into small bands, or classes, each with about a dozen or twenty members, and a leader was appointed over each. The leader was to call upon each member of the class each week and collect his or her contribution toward the repayment of the debt. Soon these classes were holding regular meetings, not only to collect their contributions, but to share their experiences, and to give and receive helpful advice in facing and living the Christian life. Thus came into existence the Methodist "Class Meeting," that became one of the most characteristic forms of Methodist procedure. We Methodists have never found any adequate substitute, as a means of keeping a growing organization spiritually alive, for this cellular structure of classes, or units, within the larger Christian fellowship.

Another step in the development of Methodist polity arose out of the imperative needs of the growing movement. John Wesley endeavored, at first, to visit every society and call personally upon every individual member of it, at regular intervals. As the work developed, however, the demand became more and more insistent for more leaders who might serve as pastors and preachers. Young men, who had been awakened by Methodist preaching, possessing gifts for public address, felt the urge to preach. At first, Wesley was opposed to the idea of lay preachers. But again he was compelled to reckon realistically with the concrete situation. A young Methodist named Thomas Maxfield had begun, upon his own initiative, to preach in some of the Methodist societies. After heeding the advice of his mother, and withholding judgment until he had heard the young man preach, Wesley gladly yielded the point: "It is the Lord's doing; let him do what seemeth to him good."

The next step in the organization of the Methodist movement came seven years after the Revival began.

John Wesley had pushed out into all the neglected areas of British life. The rapid increase of population, particularly in the centers of industrial development, had outdistanced the antiquated organization of the Church of England. Often, during the earlier years of his preaching, Wesley was sharply censored by Anglican leaders, for invading the parish boundaries of other ministers and preaching without their permission. He resolutely insisted upon his right, under the call of God, to preach wherever he found that he could do any good. And the criticisms of the Establishment were largely robbed of any point because of the fact that the people to whom the Methodist preachers ministered were, for the most part, totally neglected by the clergy of the Established Church.

As the work developed, and as more and more lay preachers were enlisted as his assistants, Wesley became concerned about their training and equipment for the ministry. He likewise felt the need of the advice of others to help him in guiding the progress of the movement. Accordingly, in 1744, he called together at the Foundery in London several friendly clergymen of the Established Church, and a number of the lay preachers from near-by circuits, for several days of "conversations." The order of business was defined in terms of questions, and the conclusions to which the discussions pointed were carefully written out, often in some detail, in the minutes of these conferences. Thus began the "Annual Conference," which has become the basic unit of Methodist ecclesiastical organization. At first it was only selected preachers who were invited. Later it became the custom to call all of the Methodist preachers to these "Annual Conferences." As the work spread into the colonies and westward, after American independence, across the western continent, the territory was divided and ministers grouped into various separate conferences. Later, laymen were admitted, first to a limited participation, and finally to

complete parity with the ministers, and the Methodist Conferences became genuinely representative assemblies in a fundamentally democratic religious society.

OUR METHODIST HERITAGE

As we survey the history of the Methodist movement, three major characteristics stand out as particularly significant. The first we might call *A Vital Mysticism*. When we use such a term as "mysticism," we need to be on our guard. It will not be needful to enter into the perennial debate over the almost endless variety of religious phenomena which have been identified as forms of mystical experience. By "vital mysticism" we mean simply a sense of immediate contact, through the ordinary channels of intelligence and understanding, with indubitable spiritual reality. There are three phrases, that were often upon the lips of our Methodist fathers, that may serve to clarify what we mean by the use of this term, and to indicate three characteristic forms of experience in which this vital mysticism found expression in the faith and practice of Methodism.

1. Our Methodist fathers were fond of the phrase, "experimental religion." No note was more often sounded in early Methodist preaching than the confident testimony that every man might know, beyond the peradventure of any doubt, that he was a child of God. Our fathers were following a sound principle when they hit upon the term "experimental" to describe vital religion. *Ours is an experimentally verifiable faith.* We can make ourselves familiar with the method and practice of other generations. We can profit by all that the rich experience of the past can teach us, of ways and means by which we may cultivate a vital religious experience. We can draw upon our own knowledge, enriched by the results of the best scholarship of our time, and the understanding we have won through our own experimental living. We can proceed upon the conviction that there cannot be any

experience essential to religion that came to Moses, or to Abraham, or to Isaiah, or John, or Peter, or Paul, that is not our privilege today. And, if we set ourselves, with open minds, and with willing and disciplined spirits, to the search for God, we can win, in our generation, just as genuine and satisfying a sense of peace and complete *rapprochement* with God as our fathers ever knew. *Ours is an experimentally verifiable faith.*

2. The second phrase that our fathers were fond of using to define the character of this vital mysticism was "the witness of the Spirit." "The witness of the Spirit," said John Wesley, in one of his sermons, "is the most precious gift, and the one grand part of the testimony which God has given to [the Methodists] to bear to all mankind." When we analyze what our fathers meant by this "witness of the Spirit," in addition to that sense of assurance of complete acceptance by God, of which we have already spoken, it comes down to this: *The validity of Christian experience is independent of all purely external authority.*

We Methodists have always stood upon the fundamental Protestant platform, in insisting that the validity of our Christian experience is independent of the authority of any ecclesiastical institution. And, in the light of the bitter life-and-death struggle that is now on throughout the world between the principle of absolute authority in State or Church and the principle of spiritual liberty, we discover a new significance for our Protestantism. For weal or for woe, we are set in uncompromising antagonism to every form of totalitarian system, whether it be of State or of Church. We stand today upon the same ground upon which Martin Luther stood before the Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms. With him we say to every human authority that ventures to assume for us the place or the prerogatives of God: "It cannot be right for a Christian to speak against his conscience. We stand here and can say no more. God help us. Amen!"

Again, the validity of our Christian experience is independent of any and every dogmatic orthodoxy. One of the most precious items in our heritage is the remarkable open-mindedness of John Wesley. "I think and let think," he said. "If thy heart is right as my heart is right, give me thy hand." This fact of our complete emancipation from dogmatic authority has gone far to save Methodism from the constant bickering and bitter battling over words and formulae that have characterized the history of many of our sister denominations. In the period of readjustment between the traditional vocabulary of religion and the new vernacular of science, Methodism has come through without serious disturbance to her fellowship. We are not afraid of truth, no matter from what source it comes. We are ready to follow truth, no matter in what direction it seems to lead. Faith and reason are not two antagonistic disciplines. They are two aspects of one common intelligence. To call one in question is to impugn the other as well. John Wesley declared: "It is a fundamental principle with us that to renounce reason is to renounce religion; that religion and reason go hand in hand; and that all irrational religion is false religion." The same Creator who gave us our capacity to believe gave us our ability to reason and to think. There is neither in the constitution of the universe nor in the teaching of the Scriptures any warrant of encouragement for lazy minds. We press on in our quest for truth, in confidence that the Holy Spirit of God is indeed "the Spirit of Truth," who "will lead into all the truth" minds that are free from prejudice, disciplined in spirit, and devoted to the quest. In the end, the validity of our Christian experience will find verification in its own inherent consistency with the Spirit that we find in Jesus Christ.

3. The third form which vital mysticism took in Wesleyan preaching, and which has characterized Methodism at its best all through the years, was that yearning after complete holiness of living that has been somewhat awk-

wardly baptized with the name, "entire sanctification." It was Wesley's acquaintance with William Law's *Serious Call to a Holy Life*, and Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying*, and Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, that set him off upon his long pilgrimage of grace. Once his imagination had been captured by this entrancing vision, he could no longer rest content with any present attainment. Like a mountain climber who has glimpsed, through a rift in the clouds, the gleaming coronet of Mount Everest, he was, from that hour, forevermore incapable of finding contentment in the lowlands. His feet were set, for all the after years, to scale the heights.

We have misunderstood and maligned this grand old doctrine of our fathers. But we have never quite managed to escape from its claims upon us. We have always known that there can be no divorce between a dedication to discipleship and the high ethical demands of the gospel of Jesus. We have never been quite satisfied with the experience of conversion as an ultimate goal. We have known that a Christian life, like any other form of life, must be a growing and developing experience. And, like every other form of life, the Christian life moves on by definable steps toward an attainable maturity of Christian character. *We Methodists can never surrender our faith in the practicable perfectibility of Christian character.*

During the last thirty or forty years Methodism has been responding, with increasing enthusiasm and consistency of purpose, to a new movement within the Christian fellowship. This movement represents essentially a fresh and significant application of this familiar doctrine of Christian perfection. The so-called "Social Gospel" is simply the insistence that Christian faith must find expression in a new quality of corporate as well as of individual living. Our aim is the achievement of a redeemed society made up of redeemed individuals. And this is essentially a declaration of our faith, and a dedication of our purpose, to seek to realize the practicable perfectibility of

society as well as of individual character. We are still, like our fathers, set to "spread scriptural holiness across the land." Our objective is not simply solitary saints, but, rather, a sanctified society. Our task can be no less than to build the kingdom of God among men.

This leads us into the second distinctive characteristic of Methodism. That is *an irrepressible social activism*. We may very well question which occasioned the more derision and petty persecution from other Oxford students, the excessive zeal of the members of the "Holy Club" in devotional exercises, or their unaccountable concern for the poor. In reconstructing the history of Methodist beginnings, we need to put alongside the regularity with which those young Oxonians went to prayers, the frequency with which they took communion, and their zeal in studying the Scriptures, their visits to the prisons, their collections to provide clothing, food, and medicine for the poor, and their efforts to organize schools for the children of these poor. We are all familiar with the way in which John R. Green attributed to the Methodist Revival a position of primary influence in the promotion of such major social reforms as the reconstruction of prison policies, the reform of penal laws, the abolition of the slave trade, and the initiation of movements for popular education. The history of Methodism in the United States offers abundant evidence of the leading part played by Methodist people in the struggle to destroy human slavery and to outlaw the liquor traffic. In the light of this history it is not surprising to find Methodists among the most prominent in the demand for a radical reconstruction of the economic pattern of contemporary society. We Methodists have recognized it as implicit in the spirit of Methodism that we accept a sense of social responsibility as the mark of the true Christian and that we dedicate our lives to seek the concrete application of our understanding of the gospel of Jesus through the recon-

struction of the attitudes, practices, and institutions of society as well as of individual lives.

The third characteristic of our Methodist heritage that we should single out for emphasis is that of *an extraordinary genius for adapting the means at hand to the end desired*. This has already been noted as manifest in the remarkable administrative ability and practical common sense of John Wesley. One of the most significant things about the way in which Methodism has grown has been the unusual flexibility and adaptability of her ecclesiastical structure. Practically every item that is peculiar to Methodist polity has come as the result of an innovation devised to meet a practical emergency. We Methodists have striven to keep the proper perspective that always subordinates the immediate instrument used to the service of the end that is to be served. It is in that spirit that we have launched out upon this new venture of a united Methodist Church.

II

WE ARE ONE PEOPLE

IN one sense of the word the Evangelical Revival, out of which Methodism came, really began on the American continent. In 1734 Jonathan Edwards had preached his sermon on "The Reality of Spiritual Light," which precipitated the revival in Northampton, Massachusetts, and served as a prelude to "The Great Awakening," which profoundly stirred the North Atlantic colonies from 1740 onward. In this awakening, no voice exercised a more potent force than that with which George Whitefield trumpeted the reveille of religious revival from one end of the British colonies to the other. Whitefield had sailed for Georgia just before John Wesley reached England, on his return from his unhappy ministry in that colony. For a year and a half Whitefield ranged up and down the Atlantic seaboard, preaching everywhere to immense throngs. He was to return again and again, crossing the Atlantic altogether thirteen times before he came to his final rest at Newburyport, Massachusetts. His preaching awakened multitudes and brought an immense spiritual tonic to all the Protestant churches of the New World. But Whitefield was never an organizer. It was not until more than thirty years after his first meteoric appearance on the shores of North America that the first Methodist society in what is now the United States was organized.

THE BEGINNINGS OF AMERICAN METHODISM

There will probably always be argument upon the point of the priority of Methodist beginnings in the New World. While the weight of evidence seems to lie in favor of New York, the claims of Maryland still have

their advocates. It was inevitable that, sooner or later, with the constant stream of emigration from England to the American colonies, that continued throughout the colonial period, Methodists should cross the Atlantic. There may have been earlier arrivals. But the names that have survived in history as pioneers in laying Methodist foundations in America are Philip Embury and Barbara Heck in New York and Robert Strawbridge in Maryland. Perhaps, to keep the record completely clear, we ought to add that of Robert Williams, who began his preaching in Norfolk, Virginia.

It was in August, 1760, that a shipload of immigrants brought Philip Embury and his wife, and his cousin Barbara Heck and her husband to New York. Five years later another group of five families from the same locality in the old country joined them. Shortly after this, Barbara Heck became concerned about the spiritual status of this group of Methodist immigrants. The story has it that, coming home one day and finding some of the party playing cards in her kitchen, she went over to Embury's house and said to him, "Brother Embury, you must preach to us, or we shall all go to hell, and God will require our blood at your hands." Embury had been appointed a local preacher in the old country, and after some urging by his cousin, he began to preach. The first Methodist service in New York seems to have been held about ten years before the Declaration of Independence. A year later Captain Thomas Webb, of the British army, was transferred to New York and added his labors to those of Embury. In 1770 the site of old John Street Church was purchased and a building was erected. The first subscription paper carried two hundred fifty names. It is interesting to note that among the signers were the Mayor of the city of New York, and also some African slaves. We Methodists have, from the very beginning, been a cosmopolitan people.

At approximately the same time that the first Meth-

odists were becoming concerned about their spiritual responsibilities in New York, Robert Strawbridge came to Baltimore and settled on Sam's Creek, inland some distance from the city. Two or three years later, one of his neighbors, John Evans, offered his house as a meetingplace, and a Methodist society was organized, which continued to meet there for upwards of forty years.

It was not long before Methodists in England began to hear, through correspondence with friends overseas, of these modest beginnings in the New World. Robert Williams and a friend named Ashton became concerned and applied to Wesley for permission to go over and lend a hand. Williams preached his first sermon at Norfolk, Virginia. In 1768, just after Captain Webb began preaching in New York, Thomas Taylor, one of the trustees of the John Street society, wrote John Wesley appealing to him to send over preachers to help in the work in America. At the twenty-sixth Methodist Conference, held in Leeds, England, August 1, 1768, Wesley read Taylor's letter and called for volunteers. Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor offered themselves and came over. Two years later the minutes of the Conference in England reported five appointments in the colonies. In 1771 Wesley made another call for volunteers. Five men offered themselves and two were accepted. One of these was Francis Asbury, who said "Good-by" to his widowed mother and set out upon "the long road" that was to lead him to become the real founder of American Methodism.

After the close of the American Revolution, Wesley recognized that it was not practicable to attempt to continue to direct the growing Methodist Movement in America from England. Until the colonists won their political independence from the mother country, the founder of Methodism clung to the hope that his spiritual children might ultimately be brought within the fold of the old Church of England. Now, however, he

accepted the inevitability that Methodists would become an independent Church. At the Conference in Leeds, in the summer of 1784, he enlisted five men to go to America. On September 2 of that year, with the assistance of another ordained clergyman of the Church of England, he set apart Thomas Coke to be a "General Superintendent" of the Methodists in the United States. He had prepared an abridgment of the "Thirty-nine Articles of Religion" of the Church of England and an order of public worship, which he gave to Doctor Coke and the other four men who were to accompany him, and sent them over to call the Methodist preachers in the United States together to organize a Church. The Conference met at Baltimore, Maryland, on December 24, 1784—the memorable "Christmas Conference." At this Conference the Methodist Episcopal Church was formally organized. Francis Asbury was ordained deacon and elder and, with Thomas Coke, was elected a "General Superintendent," or as they very shortly came to be called, a "Bishop," of the new Church. American Methodism was on its way.

We do not have space here to tell the story of the growth and spread of Methodism in America and around the world. That story has been told vividly and interestingly in such volumes as Halford E. Luccock and Paul Hutchinson have given us in *The Story of Methodism*, and William Warren Sweet in *Methodism in American History*. The unique character of the structure and polity of the Methodist Church, with its centralized executive authority, its system of Annual Conferences and annual appointments, its plan of circuits and charges, made it peculiarly adapted for the conquest of a virgin continent. Methodist preachers were sent out, in the same spirit in which John Wesley commissioned one of the preachers he sent over from England: "I let you loose on the continent of America. Do all the good you can and publish the Gospel in the open face of the sun." The first Meth-

odist Conference conceived the task of the Church to be "to reform the continent and to spread scriptural holiness across the land." Often a Methodist preacher would be given an appointment that comprised territory in which as yet there was not a single organized society. These circuit riders rode out in the van of the surging tides of population that pushed farther and farther west, in successive waves of emigration, until they had spanned the continent. They followed the imperious urge of the awakening missionary passion, that was part and parcel of the genius of Methodism, and carried the banner of the Church into all the far corners of the earth.

THE MAKING OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

It is not our purpose here to follow in detail the story of the divisions and the steps by which these divisions were healed in the union of the three major branches of American Methodism in "The Methodist Church." That has been admirably done in Professor Garver's *The Methodists Are One People*. There is no particular point in trying to keep alive the recollection of the issues that formerly divided us. Today we rejoice that, in organic fact, as in essential spirit we always have been, *We are one people*. It was said on many occasions, prior to the meeting of the "Uniting Conference" in Kansas City, Missouri, on April 26, 1939, that this Conference was called together to build a new church. In sober fact, however, this was a serious misstatement. No conference, no matter with what plenary ecclesiastical authority it may have been endowed, can ever build a church. Our Methodism has been two hundred years in the building. And the new "Methodist Church" into whose ampler channel the divergent streams of the earlier Methodist churches have been turned will be generations in the building. That is our task in the years ahead.

We are interested here in noting some of the values that have been won out of the two hundred years of

growth and development that lie behind us, that have entered into the enrichment of our present experience of united fellowship, and that help to give promise of still more significant spiritual achievements in the years that are yet to be. We Methodists, whatever may have been the particular nomenclature by which we have been accustomed to identify ourselves in the hundred years of our separation, have cherished all along the rich endowment of our common Methodist heritage. The unique character of our ecclesiastical polity has been one of the major items that we have possessed in common. Some form of episcopacy has characterized most of the Christian bodies from the beginnings. The peculiar genius of American society, which took its form under the influence of three hundred years living on an open frontier, profoundly modified the character of episcopal government. In American Methodism we have developed a form of episcopacy that combines in an unusually happy fashion the efficiency of centralized authority with all of the values of a fundamental democracy. The character of our appointing system has demonstrated its superiority over the completely congregational pattern, in maintaining uninterrupted pastoral service through trying and difficult periods. The Methodist circuit riders were almost uniformly the pioneer missionaries in the opening of the frontier. And again, in more recent years, under the pressure of acute economic stringency, the Methodist system has made possible the continuance without interruption of the program of the Church in community after community in which societies organized upon the basis of complete congregational independence have been forced to suspend operations.

Even more significant than any matter of formal organic structure has been the inner spirit of Methodism. The Methodist Church was born in a period of religious awakening. The first Methodist preachers were commissioned primarily as evangelists. Today, as we sur-

vey our task, we may feel that the conceptions of the character and dimensions of a church program, which satisfied the Methodist minister a hundred years ago, are inadequate to meet the demands of which we are conscious today. That is in large part owing to the fact that our whole social situation has radically changed. In its beginnings, both in England and in America, Methodism was not designed to become an independent Church. The Methodist societies were just what they were called. They were religious societies organized, at least in principle, within the body of the Church. It was the hope and the expectation of John Wesley that these societies should find their function in the revival of the spiritual life of the Established Church. It was only in the face of circumstances which clearly and unmistakably indicated that it was impossible longer to hope that the Methodists could find a home within the bosom of the mother Church that Wesley accepted the idea and set about helping to plan for the organization of an independent Church.

The character of American society inevitably determined the pattern both of polity and program that should become the prevailing practice among American Methodists. The primary social problem, for nearly one hundred years after the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, was the mastery of the frontier and the laying of adequate moral and spiritual foundations for a genuinely Christian community. It was inevitable that the Methodist minister should continue to conceive of his task primarily in terms of evangelism. The situation which we Methodists face today is radically different from that which our fathers faced. The changed social situation has pressed upon us the imperative necessity of redefining our objectives and reconstructing the patterns of church program which we shall follow through. And still that which was the primary urge in the heart of our fathers must continue to be a major purpose for us today.

We are still called to evangelize the men and women in our community. The old frontier has passed. But we live, nonetheless, upon a frontier. And the character of that frontier bids fair to exercise just as determinative an influence upon all our social institutions and upon our fundamental habits of thinking as ever did the old frontier in the lives of our fathers. A frontier is simply the growing edge in a dynamic civilization. It is the point at which old ways are passing and new ways are being conceived. We may find it wise to explore new methods and to use new tools and implements. But our ultimate objective is the same. We are still commissioned by our Master "to seek and to save that which is lost." The goal toward which we strive to move is still the day in which "*the rule of the world has passed to our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever*" (Revelation 11. 15).

We Methodists have shared, all through the years, a common sense of the privilege of every child of God to enter into a vital personal religious experience. We may have come upon a day in which some of the old terminology needs retranslation into a new vernacular. This, however, need occasion no dismay. Rather it is a matter for profound thanksgiving. Within recent months the American Bible Society has given wide publicity to the fact that some portion of the Bible has been translated into the one-thousandth language. Our Scriptures have been rendered in a thousand vernaculars; but they all speak the same "Word of God." That "evangelical experience" which has been our proud boast as Methodists, is a universal experience. It has been shared in every generation and it has been reproduced upon every continent. It is our task today to bring to the men and women of our time the "Good News" that every man may know in his own soul an experience of the redeeming grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord.

We Methodists have shared, all through the years, a

sense of social responsibility. This imperious urge to effective social action has found expression in a wide variety of forms. It has been providential that we have never committed ourselves to any one rigorous pattern of political or economic structure or of social procedure. We have been able to maintain, within our common fellowship, a catholicity of welcome to men and women with widely divergent political and economic philosophies, that may well prove to be among the most significant contributions that We Methodists can make to this troubled and turbulent time. It is a matter of tremendous significance that our Christian faith does create an inclusive fellowship within which all the sharp divergencies and bitter antagonisms that threaten to disrupt human society can be resolved in a common sharing of the universal human quest for the supreme values of human living. The very character of this quest, however, makes imperative that we should keep alive our sense of responsibility to make our faith and devotion to our Lord gear effectively into the concrete problems and practices of contemporary living. The primary importance which was given, in The Uniting Conference, to the program of evangelism, and the practical unanimity with which that Conference approved the reaffirmation of "The Social Creed" for The Methodist Church, are reassuring harbingers that We Methodists are keeping faith with the spirit of our fathers.

In the long course of the years of our divided living it has been only natural that we should have developed somewhat divergent practices. Each of the constituent elements, that have united to form The Methodist Church, has had to deal realistically with the concrete situations which it faced. Each has done its own bit of pioneering. In the make-up of the structure of our united Methodism each has made its own valuable contribution to the enrichment of our united fellowship. The Methodist Protestants were in the vanguard in pressing for

the democratization of the polity of the Church. The Methodist Church conserves, in its fundamental structure, those rich values of complete recognition of laymen, upon a basis of equal representation with the ministry in all of the governing bodies of the Church, which it was the primary concern of the Methodist Protestants to secure. Methodism was, in its initiation, primarily a layman's movement. The first Methodist preachers were almost all unordained laymen. During the two hundred years that our Methodism has been growing there has been a tendency to water down the functions of the laymen in the Church and to concentrate most of the authority and responsibility for planning and directing its program in the ordained minister. Some years ago the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, set up a "General Board of Lay Activities" to revive the function and responsibility and to stimulate the initiative of laymen in the Church. This Board has been taken over by The Methodist Church. The whole structure of united Methodism bespeaks a new day of enlarged responsibility and increased participation for laymen in the councils of the Church.

Like any other organization that grows through the everyday experience of living men, a church is constantly finding itself taking on added functions and setting up new forms of organization. All three of the constituent bodies which have united to make up the new Methodist Church have seen a variety of boards and forms of organized educational and promotional program develop, and all have struggled to bring these varied elements into closer correlation with an essentially unified program of spiritual service. All three have made numerous experiments in the consolidation of benevolent boards. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, during the years immediately preceding Unification had succeeded in effecting a consolidation of administrative control over their missionary agencies and a correlation of the varied

forms of Christian education for all the age-groups in the Church that helped to blaze the way for setting up a unified structure of administration of missionary organization and a completely correlated program of Christian education for The Methodist Church.

For more than one hundred years We Methodists have been engaged in missionary enterprise in every corner of the earth. During these years we have seen vigorous indigenous native churches rising, particularly in Japan, in Korea, in China, in India and Burma, in the Malay countries and in Latin America. Within the last twenty or thirty years all these areas have been profoundly influenced by a rising tide of revolt against imperialistic political control by alien governments. Naturally, the churches within these lands have felt that the Church should be given the same kind of freedom that the people were seeking in political and economic relationships. Under the pressure of this demand the Methodists in Japan and Korea and in Mexico set up independent Methodist churches, which maintain a close and cordial fraternal relationship with the mother Church. At the General Conference in Kansas City, in 1928, the Methodist Episcopal Church inaugurated a plan of setting up autonomous "Central Conferences" in the lands outside the United States. This Central Conference plan has been incorporated and carried forward to become one of the most significant characteristics of the new Methodist Church. The organization of completely autonomous Central Conferences has already been put into effect or is in process of completion in China, Southern Asia, the Philippine Islands, Latin America, Germany, and Northern Europe. Tentative plans have been approved for setting up Central Conferences in Central and Southern Europe, Africa, and Southeastern Asia.

The idea represented in the plan of Central Conferences in lands outside the United States of America has blazed the way for drawing the pattern of structure for

a united Methodist Church in America. The plan of Jurisdictional Conferences, that constitutes the basic framework of the "Plan of Union," is simply an application of the principle of autonomous areas based upon geographical or cultural community of interests, incorporated in a larger and inclusive fellowship of one united Methodist Church.

WE METHODISTS

The idea that We Methodists have thus striven to incorporate in a concrete pattern of ecclesiastical polity is rich with promise for the future of Christian civilization. It seems clear that the only hope of escape from a catastrophe of unimaginable magnitude, that would certainly destroy the fabric of civilization, must lie in our ability to incorporate into the political life of the peoples of the world this principle of local autonomy within the essentially united community of an inclusive human fellowship. There must be a place for the freest opportunity for every significant human element in our total complex world society to develop its own peculiar genius and explore all the latent possibilities it may possess for creative and constructive experimental human living. And at the same time there must be established and maintained, underneath and including all the manifold varieties of social, economic, political, and cultural diversity, a common bond of human fellowship that shall lead us all to realize our common humanity as children of one common Heavenly Father.

We Methodists will find ourselves moving amid familiar scenes wherever we shall go within the structure of our new Methodist Church. We still cherish the same basic conditions for admission to the Christian fellowship. "All persons seeking to be saved from their sins and desiring to live the Christian life are eligible for membership in The Methodist Church." Nowhere can we find a more genuinely catholic platform than that.

We shall find the local congregation governed by an Official Board, with the final authority in each local congregation vested in the Quarterly Conference. We shall find ourselves coming together in an "Annual Meeting" at least once a year, in which every member of the Church eighteen years of age and over has a voice and vote. We shall find the same series of Quarterly and Annual Conferences to which we have been accustomed. Now the lay delegates sit as members of the Annual Conference throughout the session. There will be a "Jurisdictional Conference" in each of the six Jurisdictions in the Church in the United States. In these Jurisdictional Conferences we shall elect Bishops to serve within the Jurisdiction and also the members of the general Benevolence boards. We shall continue to elect delegates to a General Conference, the supreme legislative authority of the Church. And we shall have in the Judicial Council a permanent high tribunal to which all questions concerning the constitutionality of acts of the General Conference or administrative policies of the officials of the Church will go for final review.

III

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

WE say that we are Methodists. But, first of all *We must be Christians*. Those characteristics that have distinguished the Methodists, which we would like to emphasize, are not characteristics that set us apart from other Christian people. They are all elements in our common Christian heritage. We must, first of all, be Christians, or it will not matter much whether we are Methodists, or what else we may be. That is our primary vocation. *We must be Christians*.

We read, in the book of Acts, that it was in the city of Antioch that the followers of Jesus were first called "Christians." To be a Christian was something of a novelty then. It was not difficult to identify those who were the adherents of this new faith. Today to be a Christian has become a commonplace of everyday experience. We even speak of our whole civilization as being a Christian civilization. The sharp outline of that which distinguishes one who is, from one who is not, a Christian has been blurred, until it is not at all clear in our thinking just what we mean by saying that we are Christians.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

Too often we are inclined to find the answer in terms of distinctions that are superficial, or even completely beside the point. When we are faced with the question, "Are you a Christian?" sometimes we think of stories like *Robinson Crusoe*, or motion-picture films like *Trader Horn* or *Bring Them Back Alive*. We think of pictures or of descriptions that we have read of people who live in barbarous or half-civilized societies, people who dress in strange costumes, speak a queer foreign language,

and have outlandish manners and customs. And we say: "Why, of course we are Christians. We live in a civilized country, where people know how to dress decently, and where they observe the customs of a Christian community." It only requires a moment's thought to realize how inadequate such a definition must be. Manners and customs are not unimportant. But we shall have to look deeper than such merely superficial characteristics to find an adequate definition of what it means to be a Christian.

Sometimes, when we ask a man about his religious affiliation he will reply, "I am a Protestant." What he really means is, "I am *not* a Roman Catholic." And when we are asked, "Are you a Christian?" and reply in the affirmative, we mean very little more than to insist that we are not Jews, or Mohammedans, or heathen of some form or other. Too often we define our spiritual status in terms of what we are not. It is never enough just to be sure of what we are not. Convictions that are based upon fears or prejudices are very likely to be based upon misunderstandings. A man needs to be something positive, to have genuine convictions, if his profession is to count for much. We cannot build dependable loyalties, nor stable character, upon mere negatives.

A good many times, when the question is asked, "Are you a Christian?" we do not think of much more than whether or not we have entered into some formal relationship with the organized church. We think of whether or not we have been baptized, or whether we have been formally received as a member of the church. To be a Christian to many means little more than that we have our names entered on the roster of membership of some ecclesiastical organization somewhere. In altogether too many instances we are content to hold our church membership in some kind of absentee relationship. We are formally members of a church in some other community where we once resided. We decline to accept the responsibilities of active relationship with the church where

we are living on the plea that we are members elsewhere. And we give no concrete evidences of interest in the church where our membership formally is kept. It ought to be evident to anyone who will think seriously about it that church membership can never mean more than we make it mean by our presence, our interest, our support, and our active participation in the fellowship of the church.

Too many of us are content to be what one prominent member of a church of which I was once pastor confessed: "After all, we are just 'conventional' Christians." When pressed upon the point, we confess that we "belong to the Methodist Church." We attend its services more or less regularly. We make occasional contributions, when we cannot avoid it without embarrassment. We may read our Bibles, somewhat desultorily. We may observe some more or less regular forms of prayer—like mumbling a formula of grace at the table, or repeating the Lord's Prayer with the rest of the congregation upon occasion. There are some grown men and women who keep on repeating the simple prayers such as "Now I lay me down to sleep," that they were taught as little children. If asked, we would insist that we believe in God. But, if we are pressed for particulars, there are many of us who would like to confess with the man of whom Professor Pratt tells in *The Religious Consciousness*, who said, in a prayer-meeting testimony, that to him God was a "kind of oblong blur." There are a good many men and women in the average community who try to live at least up to the minimum standard of decency and respectability demanded by the customs of the community—and call that being Christians. We ought not to disparage any positive interest, nor discount even formal professions. But a Christian life, if it is to be anything genuine or significant, must be more than a mere convention or a form of propriety. There are still too many people, like those described in the Second Letter to Timothy, who prefer

"pleasure to God—for though they keep up a form of religion, they will have nothing to do with it as a force." This, clearly, is not enough. "Let your love be a real thing," wrote the apostle.

Then, again, probably more times than not, when we face the question, "Are you a Christian?" we seek the answer in terms of whether or not we can recall a striking and dramatic conversion experience. If we can point to some definite moment in our past experience when we are confident that we heard the call of God and answered it, that settles the matter. If we cannot recall such a moment, then we are ready to conclude that probably we are not Christians. We ought not to permit ourselves to be confused at this point. It has happened a good many times, in the life of men and women, that the recollection of such an hour has held them, like an anchor that gripped the rock. No matter how sadly bewildered they might become, no matter how discouraged, no matter how sorely tempted, there was at least one hour in their lives when, beyond any question, they stood face to face with God. We ought not upon any account to disparage such an experience.

On the other hand, we must recognize that the precise character of a conversion experience that may come to any man will depend, in large part, upon his temperamental make-up, upon his previous experience, and upon any number of circumstances that may happen to characterize his immediate situation. When we think about conversion, we almost always think of the conversion of Paul as being typical of what conversion ought to mean for everyone. Paul's conversion *was* typical for Paul. But we need to remember that the New Testament tells about such men as Simon and Andrew and Philip and John and Mary and Martha. These all were just as genuinely "converted" as ever was Paul. And yet the manner in which they made their commitment to Jesus was far from the

striking and dramatic fashion in which Paul made his peace with God.

We have sometimes been admonished to "seek an experience" similar to that, for instance, which came to John Wesley in the prayer meeting in Aldersgate Street. We ought to remember that we are always on dangerous ground when we set out to seek an experience. As a matter of fact, we can never find an experience that is worth anything, either to us or to society, by seeking it. The only kind of an experience that is worth the candle always comes to us as a by-product. It comes as a consequence of our facing real issues in our own time, issues that are fraught with danger, and that demand genuine sacrifice at real cost. When we face such issues and, counting the cost, declare ourselves in a genuine commitment to a new loyalty, that becomes for us the supreme sovereign of our souls—then we really have an experience.

We need to remember that the important thing about a conversion experience is not the precise character of the experience itself, but the character of the life that comes after it. Conversion is far from being the whole of Christian experience. It is only just the beginning. Life is not remade, complete and finished off forever in any momentary uprush of emotion. Life goes on. After conversion there sometimes comes what our Methodist fathers called "backsliding." And, after conversion, there still lies ahead all that our fathers meant by "growing in grace" and by "going on to perfection" and by "being made perfect in love in this life." Life goes on. And we must take a whole life into account when we seek the answer to the question, "What does it mean to be a Christian?"

"BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED THROUGH FAITH"

For our fathers to become a Christian meant, in the first instance, that we cease our struggle to bring our own appetites and passions under control. We cease our

wrestling over the insoluble problem of how we shall ever balance the books in our accounts with God. The books never can be balanced by any assets that we can throw into the bargaining. We simply accept unconditionally the unmerited grace and mercy of God. That was, clearly, what it meant to John Wesley. In his description of the evening in Aldersgate Street, he wrote in his *Journal*: "About a quarter before nine," while a man was reading Martin Luther's description of "the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for my salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death."

John Wesley was using the proper term when he used the word "trust." We make a good deal of use of the term "faith" in our thinking about the problem of salvation. "It is by grace you have been saved, as you had faith; it is not your doing but God's gift" (Ephesians 2. 8), is the New Testament way of putting it. Whenever we think of "faith" we are likely to think of "belief." And we must not discount the importance of right thinking. There is no more foolish nor disastrous doctrine than the statement that has been popularly held during the past generation that "it doesn't make any difference what a man believes." It does make all the difference in the world what men believe. Our Christian faith involves a characteristic way of thinking about God and about man and about the primary objectives of human living. The danger is that we shall get our perspective distorted. The elaboration of what Christians believe always comes after, it never precedes the essential Christian experience. The primary factor is just this—that God is one to whom we can surrender in utter trust and confidence in his mercy and grace. This is the message that makes the gospel "Good News." It is the witness that we bear that in Christ God has come near to us. He has taken the

initiative. He has come seeking us. It is that, in the story of Jesus, we discover an insight into the essential character of God as loving and redeeming Father, that leads us to yield to him in complete trust and loyalty.

The word "sin" has gotten into bad company in much of our popular thinking. We have gotten to the place where a good many have been saying that we would better dispense with the term altogether. We do not need to haggle overmuch about terminology. The important matter is that we realize that the fact in experience, which this term our fathers used was intended to define, is a matter of constant and inescapable concern for everyone. The words in both the Hebrew and the Greek that are translated "sin" in the Old and New Testaments, are words that mean, literally, "to miss the mark." To sin, in other words, is to fail to be the best of which we are capable. There is more to it than just the mere fact of failure. There is included an element of intent. One of the best marksmen in our time has said that the major factor in good marksmanship is the purpose to shoot straight. That is the heart of our problem. We do not need to think seriously about the problem of right living very long before we begin to be aware that there is treason within ourselves. That is the root of the matter.

No matter what terms we may prefer to use by which to describe it or how we may seek to account for it, every man of us has had the experience of facing a moment of decision and, with a clear conviction of what we ought to do, choosing rather the thing for which our conscience condemned us. We have all known what it means to wrestle with a divided self, and find our worse leagued against our better nature. We have known that sense of personal humiliation that comes when we recognize that we have proved traitor to the best and highest that we know. We have known what it means to feel the bonds of evil habits grow upon us until we are tempted to feel that there is no hope of our ever becoming what we know

we ought to be. We have a feeling that we are what we are—the creatures of biological inheritance, the puppets of circumstance, the bondslaves of habit. We are caught, helpless, in the inexorable chain of cause and consequence, and there is nothing that we can do about it, except live out our doom in ultimate despair.

This is where the Gospel of Jesus speaks its word of hope and deliverance. It is the triumphant testimony of our Christian faith that we need not continue to remain the helpless slaves of our own unworthy past. There is, in the very structure of Reality itself, a grand redemptive force that is forever seeking the creation of Christlike character and the rehabilitation of lives that have missed the way. As we used to put it in the old communion ritual, our Heavenly Father is one “whose property it is always to have mercy.” When the physician sets out to prescribe for his patient, he acts in the confident faith that he does not battle alone. He has a mighty ally in life itself. Through all the veins and arteries of the patient’s body, in every nerve and bone and sinew the grand creative and recreative power of life is already in the struggle to rebuild broken tissues and restore the dissipated vital energies. All that a physician can do is to clear the barriers away and give life a chance.

That is all God asks of anyone. All that is required to make available the infinite redemptive grace of God for the rehabilitation of lost souls is that we break down the barriers and open the door to him. This does not mean that sin does not matter, after we repent. There is a terrible irrevocableness about the consequences of sin that nothing in earth or heaven can undo. We can never be what we might have been if we had not sinned. But the promise of the gospel and the testimony of all the generations of Christian faith is that no man need continue to be what he has become. Through the mercy and grace of God every human life, no matter how broken and

wasted by evil living, may be rebuilt into a genuinely Christlike character.

The application of the grace of God waits only for our acceptance. All that is required to fill our lungs with air and start the floods of revitalizing oxygen streaming through every artery and capillary of our physical being is that we expand our chests. Every moment of our being, the vast ocean of the atmosphere is pressing in upon us from every direction. When our throat or nasal passages become clogged with diseased tissue and we struggle and gasp for breath, all around us the life-giving atmosphere is pressing for admission at every pore of our bodies. All that it wants is that we should clear the passages. Then the air streams in. This is what it means to be a Christian. It means that we "repent," we "change our minds." Instead of holding out in stubborn opposition to the ways of God, we are "converted," we "turn around," and set our face to move in the direction of God's purpose. It means that we break down the barriers. We fling wide the doors. We accept the grace and mercy of God.

WE MEAN TO BE CHRISTIAN, NO MATTER WHAT

To be a Christian involves this element of personal acceptance of the grace and mercy of God. It involves also an element of personal commitment. Christianity, from the beginning, has meant a "Way" of living. Those who knew him recognized in Jesus a new spirit, a new attitude toward life and toward the responsibilities and relationships that life brings to everyone. "Anyone who does not possess the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him" (Romans 8. 9), is the apostle's familiar word. All through the Christian centuries the followers of Jesus have been distinguished from those who were not Christians by practical standards of everyday living. The precise details of the ethical standards that Christian people have acknowledged as authoritative for them have varied

with the varying circumstances and the growing experience of Christian men and women. There have been wide variations in Christian practice. And yet, through it all, there have been certain constants in terms of the objectives of living, the standard of values by which all behavior must be tested, and the spirit and attitude of all our relationships one toward another, that have persistently claimed the allegiance and loyalty of those who have called themselves Christians. Through it all the figure of Jesus has remained constant as the definitive symbol of what Christian conduct and character ought to be. Through it all the followers of Jesus have held to the basic principle that, whatever the best judgment of Christian men and women in their time recognized and accepted as the Christian pattern of conduct, that became for them the authoritative standard. *To be a Christian means that we mean to be Christians, no matter what.*

This seems to leave the matter somewhat up in the air, when we first look at it in this way. We are just a little impatient with definitions that do not define and with standards that are not explicit. We are always easily tempted to yield to the yearning for a definite, authoritative word. We would like to have everything settled for us by clear and unequivocal rules and laws. That was the way that was worked out under the old Jewish law. And the experience of the Jewish people under the law has demonstrated clearly enough the inadequacy of that method of trying to solve the problem of how to live the good life. It just is not possible to work out rules and laws that will fit every possible future situation.

The way of the gospel may seem to be disappointingly vague and intangible; but in the end it is the only really practicable way. The gospel brings to men the story of a life. And, in the telling of the story, the gospel presents it to us in a way that helps us to understand the spirit of that life. However indefinite the definition of what Christian living means may seem to be, we know enough

about the spirit of the life of Jesus, from our study of the Gospels, to know that there never has been a life that could be set upon the same plane with his. We know that, whatever we may find that Christian living must mean for us, if we turn our backs upon him, we turn our backs upon the best. Whenever we conclude, either that the Christian standard is impracticable, or will not work in this kind of a world, we do it knowing that we choose the second best. And in choosing the second best we forfeit that elemental integrity of purpose without which no character worth the name is possible. If we are ever to be the best of which we are capable, we shall have to be loyal to him. To be a Christian means that we mean to be Christian, whatever that may come to mean for us.

It is never possible to forecast all that Christian living may mean for anyone. Who could have told what it would mean to a little Scotch lad to linger after church one morning, and pluck the sleeve of the discouraged preacher of that church, and say to him, "I think I want to be a Christian"? Who could have told what that decision would mean for David Livingstone? Who could have foreseen what it would mean to Jane Addams, or to Florence Nightingale, or to Frances E. Willard, or to Albert Schweitzer, or to Wilfred Grenfell, when they made their first commitment to follow Jesus? No one can foresee, either for himself or for any other, all that is to come out of this primary commitment to the Christian Way. But we can know enough about what Christian living means to know that if we are to be true to ourselves, if we are to deal honestly and fairly with our neighbors, if we are to keep faith with God, we must be Christians, no matter what that may come to mean.

This means, inevitably, that we take down all of the "No Trespassing" signs that so many of us have set up across the paths of life. The trouble with so many of us today is that we have set up so many of these "No Trespassing" signs. We mean to be Christians, but when any-

one ventures to suggest that being a Christian might call for some reconstruction of economic practices, there is immediately a barrier erected that bars the way. "No thoroughfare!" We mean to be Christians, but if we discover that being a Christian threatens to call for some modification of our habits of personal expenditure, or some alteration of our recreational practices, or some uncomfortable discipline of impulse or appetite, we set up a sign, "Detour"—no passing here. We may not be able to see clearly in advance all of the implications of a commitment to Christian living, but this much is clear. There can be no barriers erected to the most searching self-examination, and the most radical criticism of all our attitudes and practices. We have already made the prior commitment. We are determined to be Christians, whatever that may require of us in the modification of our personal conduct or the reconstruction of our institutions and the practices of society. There are no restricted areas. As John R. Mott said some years ago, "Christ must be Lord of all, or he cannot be Lord at all." *To be a Christian means that I mean to be a Christian, no matter what.*

It will follow, once we have made this primary commitment, that we will seek to make use of every assistance which we can command to help us discover what it *does* mean to be a Christian. We will take up, with new zest and with a new seriousness of purpose, our study of the Scriptures. We will identify ourselves with the fellowship of the church. We will seek to share our questions, and whatever understandings of the meaning of Christian living may come to us with others of like mind. We shall be eager to do all that we can to help each other find the Christian way to live. We will embrace with a new enthusiasm every opportunity for active participation in Christian enterprise. We will welcome every fresh insight into the meaning of the Scriptures, or the understanding of religion, or the evaluation of various patterns of living, that we can discover from any source. We shall

have one primary purpose, that is to learn how to become more consistent followers of Jesus. *We mean to be Christians, no matter what.*

And we ought to discover, as the years pass by, that we are making substantial growth and progress in the incarnation of the spirit of Jesus in everyday human living. It is not nearly so easy to mark growth in spiritual stature, as it is to note the development of one's physical body. But a Christian life, like any other form of life, moves forward by discernible stages to a practicable maturity of Christlike character. One who is genuinely a Christian ought to find his life characterized by an increasing stability of purpose. He ought to find himself becoming increasingly familiar with the Scriptures and with the common fund of traditions that make up the Christian understanding about the meaning of living. He ought to find himself increasingly interested in, and increasingly intelligent about, the program of the church. He ought to find his life swinging with increasing constancy away from a center of narrow selfish interest and out to a new basis of genuinely God-centered living. He ought to find himself increasing in his interest in and his ability to live co-operatively with other people. "By this everyone will recognize that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another" (John 13. 35).

IV

A VITAL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

THE early Methodist societies were societies within the Church. It was John Wesley's objective, until the end of his life, to bring and hold the converts won in the Methodist Revival, within the fellowship of the Church of England. It was only with the greatest of reluctance that he consented, near the close of his career, to the idea that Methodists might ultimately become a separate Church. All through his life he was a churchman to the core. It was just because he found the Established Church of his day so neglectful of the spiritual needs of those elements in the population of Great Britain to whom the Methodist evangelists made their primary appeal, that he set about early in his career the organization of what he called "the United Society." These societies came into existence in response to the same fundamental urge out of which the Church in every generation has come.

WE OUGHT TO BE BETTER CHURCHMEN

Perhaps the circumstances of our origin, in these small groups within a larger Church, have contributed somewhat to making our sense of the bonds of our fellowship less constraining upon us than they have proved to be with other branches of the Christian Church. Perhaps the fact that, throughout the greater portion of our history We Methodists have thought of our function in the world in terms of an evangelistic proclamation, rather than in terms of building a permanent organized fellowship, has been another major contributing factor. The rather haphazard manner in which our program has developed and our polity has expanded has led us to permit a variety of subordinate organizations and groups within

the local congregation often virtually to supplant the corporate fellowship of the church as the primary allegiance of the individual communicant. The church school, and sometimes classes and groups within the school, the young people's society, the ladies' aid, the missionary society, the men's club—all these have at times been operated practically as independent units with only a tenuous relationship with the total Christian fellowship which is The Church.

We are all familiar with the complaint that membership in the church seems to mean so little to a great many who are members of the church. We have been distressed because of some families who regularly put a larger proportion of their income into dues and assessments to lodges, fraternities, and various kinds of community clubs than they do to the church. There are men and women who profess to be Christians and claim membership in the church who will decline to make any contributions to the church, and yet, at the same time, purchase a new automobile, continue to be regular attendants at motion picture shows, embark upon rather expensive vacation travel, and maintain similar habits of personal expenditure.

When we consider the column of benevolences, the situation is still more serious. The missionary enterprise comes very near the heart of the Christian gospel. Christianity is in essence a missionary faith. It is a fair question whether anyone can be genuinely Christian and not be interested in missionary service and maintain some active participation in its support. And yet, throughout the Church, a relatively small minority of the membership is actually sharing in the missionary budget. When the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church at Columbus, Ohio, in May, 1936, launched a campaign for increased missionary giving, they adopted the slogan of the "Million Unit Fellowship." A unit in this fellowship was to be represented by one who would covenant to

dedicate a dollar per month to missions. This, certainly, is a small enough amount. It ought to be within the range of the resources of nine tenths of the adults who hold membership in the Methodist connection. This goal of "one million units" anticipated enlisting only slightly more than one Methodist out of every five in support of the missionary enterprise. In carrying out the project the goal was cut in half and the Church was still unable to enlist even one tenth of the membership of the former Methodist Episcopal Church in sharing in the support of the missionary program of the Church.

When we turn to the records for church attendance, the prospect is even more provocative of earnest heart-searching questions. In the average vigorous and active church it would probably be fair to say that not more than twenty or twenty-five per cent of its members are regular attendants and active participants in its program. Perhaps another thirty or forty per cent are more or less casual and irregular in attendance. From twenty to thirty per cent are relatively indifferent to their obligations to the church. The center of their interest is in other activities and group relationships. At best the church represents, for them, one of the minor electives, in which they may find diversion when nothing more interesting or attractive happens to claim their attention. It is clear that we need to reconsider the meaning and importance of the fellowship of the Church.

RELIGION IS A SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

The Church has its roots in the nature of religion as a form of social experience. Professor Whitehead has said that religion concerns what a man does with his solitariness. There is some truth in this statement. Religion does have to do with the most intimately individual aspects of a man's experience. But this is at best only a fraction of the truth. Even more significantly religion concerns what a man shares with his neighbors. It is one

of the universally present elemental functions of group life. H. G. Wells has pungently characterized religion as a kind of "social cement" that holds society together. No other phase of the common life of the family, or clan, or tribe, in primitive society, so powerfully contributes to the sense of social solidarity as do the institutions and practices of religion. Religion is characterized by both the upward reach and the outward reach. Jesus set this truth in sharp relief when he replied to the lawyer's question about the most important commandment of the law: "The chief one is . . . *you must love the Lord your God with your whole heart. . . . The second is this: You must love your neighbor as yourself*" (Mark 12. 29-31).

We have all heard a good many times men say that "a man can be just as good a Christian outside of the church as he can inside." This statement simply is not true. It would be nearer the truth to say that *no man or woman can be a Christian at all and remain aloof from the vital fellowship that active membership in the church affords*. Sometimes in the fervor of evangelistic appeal we have said that we were not primarily concerned with increasing the membership of the church. We were primarily concerned with getting people "saved." This way of speaking leaves the clear implication that membership in the church is no vital element in the process of salvation. One of the earliest convictions that crystallized in the teaching of the early Church was the idea that "outside the Church there is no salvation." That statement is profoundly true. Personality is a product of fellowship. And Christian personality, even more than some other patterns of character, derives its sustenance from, and must seek expression through, a vital and vigorous fellowship. A man is not really "saved" until he has been effectively related to a vital fellowship. We have not fulfilled our evangelistic responsibility until we have led the individual who has registered a decision for the Christian life into the fellow-

ship of the church and established him as a living member of the church.

This, of course, still leaves open the question of the particular organization of believers through which an individual will find concrete expression of this indispensable Christian fellowship. There are faults enough that any of us can find with particular local church organizations. It may be possible for occasional individuals to maintain a significant fellowship with a group located somewhat remote from immediate vital personal relationships. But this must, in the very nature of the case, be a rare exception. In ninety-nine cases out of one hundred, if fellowship in the church is to mean any real or significant relationship, it must be represented by a particular local organization in the community in which the individual resides. We may very well raise the question whether any one who refuses to accept the responsibilities of membership in the Christian fellowship of the community of which, in all other essential relationships of living, he is a member, does not by that fact betray the essential principle of Christian discipleship.

With all the changes that have come in the forms of ecclesiastical polity, down through the years, the Church has been able to maintain a vital continuity of institutional life as well as of spirit that has contributed greatly to its ability to mediate the values preserved in the traditions of the past and make them available to the needs of each contemporary generation. One cannot create *de novo* in any generation an institution as the instrument of a vital Christian fellowship of the ageless Church. We shall, of course, find ourselves constantly experimenting with various forms of intimate group fellowship within the larger, more inclusive church. It is of the genius of religion that it represents an experience so rich and overflowing in its meaning and value that it is forever breaking over all the bounds that we attempt to fix by any pattern of human organization. On the other hand, the way,

in which all the branches of Christendom have been responding to the appeal for a more effective expression of a genuinely ecumenical fellowship is clear evidence that our generation is coming to a rediscovery of the immense values represented by the Christian doctrine of "the holy catholic Church." However impatient we may become with the immediate pattern and program of the church in any given local situation, in the long run we shall undoubtedly contribute more to the building of a vigorous Christian society by relating ourselves in vital fellowship to the existing organized church than we could hope to do by initiating some radically new and completely independent form of organization.

SHARED EXPERIENCES AND COMMON LOYALTIES

The second root from which the Church is sprung is found in the character of human nature and of human society. We are so constituted that we are not complete without each other. Any experience that moves us deeply, any experience that we find rich and meaningful, we are inevitably moved to share. Whenever we find ourselves impelled by powerful motives to seek some specific goal, we inevitably look about for others who have a common objective with whom we may unite our efforts in a common purpose. A strictly solitary soul is an abnormal soul, a psychopathic individual. We cannot maintain a healthy mental life in isolation. By the nature of our human nature we are impelled to seek to create and to share a vital fellowship.

We build our fellowships around the significant and meaningful experiences that we share, and about our common loyalty to objectives that we seek together to achieve. There is no question that one of the primary factors that helped to give Methodism the militant vitality which sent it sweeping across the pioneer settlements in America was the fact that Methodists generally shared a common pattern of religious experience. The particu-

lar outlines of that pattern were determined in large part by the conditions of frontier life, and by the rough simplicity of the psychological analysis of religious experience that characterized the preaching of the frontier evangelist. We may not be able to reproduce precisely the same pattern in every detail in our experience today. We are always in danger of losing our bearings when we become intent upon reproducing in detail any experience of any other generation. But we may still raise the question whether we will not find the primary explanation of the lack of any vigorous loyalty in the Church today in the fact that our church fellowships are built upon such a tenuous basis of shared experience. Any vital renewal of church loyalty must of necessity rest back upon a fresh and significant discovery of God which we come to share, and to the attainment of which we find mutual assistance through the fellowship of the church.

Another factor that helped to strengthen the bonds of early Methodist fellowship was the possession of a rather sharply defined understanding of the primary objective of the Church. Methodism was born of an evangelistic crusade. The whole pattern upon which the early circuits were laid out and the Conferences administered conceived the function of the preacher to be, primarily, to publish abroad the judgment of God upon human sin and the call of the gospel to repentance, and to point men to the way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. We do not plead for any attempt simply to reproduce the pioneer patterns of revival method. They served our day. Our task is still to evangelize the community in which we are set to serve. Our conception of the dimensions of that task, and the method by which it should be pursued, we shall need to fashion in the light of our understanding of the character of the problem of living today. Our task is to recognize the primary spiritual needs of our generation and discover how we can sharpen the definition of the function of the Church today so as to give to the Chris-

tian fellowship a singleness of objective and a definiteness of purpose comparable to that which our fathers knew. The reiterated emphasis which was placed in the findings of the Oxford Conference upon the challenge, "Let the Church be the Church," is one indication that we are moving out toward such a redefinition of the primary function and objective of the Church.

THE FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

How shall we conceive the function of the Church? The author of the Epistle to the Ephesians uses an illuminating figure of speech. He refers to the Church as "the body of Christ." Our physical bodies are the instruments that we use in establishing effective living relations with our environment and in carrying out the purposes that we form. When we desire to move about, we set the muscles and bones of our legs and feet in motion. When we have work to do, we make use of the mechanisms of our hands and arms. When we wish to share our experiences with others, we use our mental faculties and our vocal organs. The Church, says the apostle, is "the body of Christ." It is through the instrumentality of the Church, the organized Christian fellowship, that Christ establishes effective living relations with men and women today. And through the Church he is seeking to work out his purposes among men.

Suppose we think of some of the objectives which, as far as we can learn from the New Testament, our Lord must be seeking to realize among men. Suppose we think of the work which he is seeking to do; work that he is doing through the ministry of the Church; work that, should the Church fail to fulfill her mission, would not be done.

To begin with, *the Church is the only institution in the community that consistently attempts to awaken men and women to their need of God, and seeks to provide opportunity and guidance to help them find God.* It ought

not to be necessary to argue here the importance of organizing all of life around the primary fact of our relationship to God. If there is one word that is used more often than any other to describe our contemporary society, it is the word "secular." Ours is a "secular" civilization. That is, it is a civilization in which men and women have undertaken to organize their common life without reference to God. Another word that we have been hearing often in recent years is a reference to the "moral breakdown" of our time. Now, the essence of morality is the will to co-operative social living. The root of the ethical anarchy of our contemporary society is the fact that we have so largely organized our lives around a variety of mutually unrelated or directly antagonistic selfish interests. There is no hope of escape from the moral anarchy of our atomistic modern society until we bring men and women again to an awareness of, and to unconditional commitment to, that Ultimate Sovereignty before which all lesser loyalties give way. "You shall have no gods but me," continues to be the corner stone both of morality and of religion.

Now, if it is important that men should be awakened to a sense of their need of God, and should be given help and guidance in the cultivation of their spiritual sensibilities and the development of a vital sense of fellowship with God, we have to face the question, Through what agency in society is this to be brought about? So far as we can see, either in the light of history, or in the light of any survey we may make of the contemporary scene, the Church is the only institution that is committed to the primary objective, or is serving in any effective manner to help men and women find God.

In the second place, *the Church is the only institution in the community that consistently attempts to teach religion.* If it is a matter of vital concern that men and women should organize their lives around the primary reference to God, that means that there must be some

agency in society to teach religion. In our contemporary society the Church is the only institution that is making any serious attempt to serve this need. Sometimes we have a good deal to say about the inefficient manner in which the Church is working at this task. We do not need to offer any apologies in extenuation of the relative failure of the Church to do the work as it ought to be done. We simply call attention to the fact that, outside the Church, no other agency is making any attempt to do it. If we believe that religion should be taught, there is just one thing for us to do. We must throw our influence and effort and support more adequately behind the Church so that it may the more effectively teach religion in our time.

Then, again, *the Church is rendering a service that is indispensable to society through its prophetic ministry.* There is no hope of progress or of maintaining a wholesome life in society unless we can maintain effective agencies for the radical criticism of all existing practices and institutions. We need a criticism far more radical and penetrating than one that is motivated merely by impatience with immediate outcomes or by an interest in supplanting rival groups in the possession of power. We need a criticism that is based upon insight into ultimate values and that proceeds by constantly setting a disinterested and objective appraisal of that which is over against a fresh interpretation of that which ought to be. We have, in the public school, in the public press, and in the institutions of democratic government reasonably effective instruments for a more or less thoroughgoing criticism of public policies and public institutions. All of these agencies of criticism, however, are, by the very nature of the structure of our society, involved in the struggle of rival groups for the possession of the privileges of power.

It is the function of the Church, while remaining aloof from any direct alliance with rival political or economic factions in society, constantly to seek to set, over against an analysis of that which is, a fresh interpretation of that

which ought to be. The Church serves to mediate to each contemporary generation the rich inheritance that is its birthright from generations that have gone before. Through the preaching and the teaching ministry of the Church our minds are recalled again and again to a fresh contemplation of such spiritually stimulating and socially creative literature as we find embodied in the Ten Commandments, in the writings of the Hebrew Prophets, in the music of the Psalter, in the parables of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount, and the practical interpretation of the meaning of high religion in terms of concrete daily living that we find in the book of Proverbs and in the Letters of the apostles. Thus, as we continually renew our vision of the ideal, we are aroused from the lethargy and smug complacency with which we are prone to accept without much question any familiar situation, we are stimulated to fresh criticism of all that we are and do, and are driven out to seek to remake ourselves and rebuild our society after the pattern of the kingdom of God.

We cannot go very far in our efforts to remake our world before we find ourselves facing the discouraging problem of lives that have missed the trail. Society has always had to wrestle with the problem of crime and its punishment. It is one of the major enterprises of all organized government to protect society against the depredations of men and women who refuse to live co-operatively with their neighbors. In the eye of the average citizen the criminal remains always a "public enemy." In all its ramifications society is organized against the evil-doer, but we have not fulfilled our mission when we have built barriers of protection against crime. There is still the problem of the incalculable loss in broken and ruined lives. And when we examine at all critically our own behavior, we soon discover how difficult it is to draw the line between the law-abiding citizen and the criminal. Upon any completely consistent enforcement of the law, we should all be hopelessly undone. We must press on

beyond the protection of society against the evildoer to the moral and spiritual rehabilitation of the man who has gone wrong. It is the Church that stands before the world with a gospel that is a word of hope. The gospel is the "Good News" that the man who has gone wrong can have another chance. There is at the heart of the universe a grand redemptive power. By the grace and the mercy of God any man can have the broken fragments of his ruined life knit together again into something of eternal worth. *It is the wondrous privilege and high prerogative of the Church to bear this witness to its faith that every life can be redeemed. It is its vocation to establish through the fellowship of the Church the means by which this redemption can be wrought.*

One more word needs to be said. *The Church, as no other institution in society today, is bearing witness and seeking to put into practice the ideal of an inclusive human fellowship.* Our society is organized in a bewildering variety of ways. But all of our forms of human organization are built upon the principle of exclusion. Our human society is torn and rent by such lines of bitter cleavage as separate Aryan from Semite, Oriental from Occidental, white-skinned from colored people, the capitalist from the economically dispossessed. There is real danger that we shall destroy our whole civilization in the destructive violence of international and civil strife.

In a world so divided by lines of caste and class and race and nation there is desperate need for a voice that will call upon all men to unite in praying: "Our Father, who art in heaven: hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." There is desperate need for some voice to remind us of the parable of the good Samaritan, and the uncompromising obligation of love and sympathy and mutual service that is the heart of the Christian gospel. We freely grant that the Church has not always kept faith with her own ideals. The Church has been built of very human men

and women who have brought into its fellowship all of the frailties and imperfections of their human heritage. But the Church has never lost her vision of the inclusive fellowship that she ought to create, and she has never ceased to struggle toward a more complete incarnate of that ideal in the corporate organization of her life.

With all its faults, to a degree that no other human institution has yet attained, the Church, through its growing sense of the ecumenical Church, is putting into practice this principle of a universally inclusive human fellowship. We Methodists may well rejoice that in the building of the structure of the new Methodist Church we have kept open doors within which the sons and daughters of God from every continent, speaking all the confused babel of human tongues, marked by every color and tint of human skin, drawn from every strata of human society, may find a welcome and hail one another as "brothers in Christ." Within the fellowship of the Church of Christ there is no place for such distinctions as Aryan and Semite, Oriental and Occidental, white and black, capitalist and Communist, but all are one in Christ.

V

"TRAIN FOR THE RELIGIOUS LIFE"

THE New Testament is full of vigorous figures of speech drawn from athletic experience and practice. The author of the First Letter to Timothy has applied one of these striking picture words to the problem of the cultivation of a vital personal religious experience. The familiar version renders the sentence in terse and vivid fashion, "Exercise thyself unto godliness." The verb is the same root from which our word "gymnasium" comes. Doctor Moffatt has caught a very happy phrase, "Train for the religious life" (1 Timothy 4. 7).

RELIGION NEEDS CULTIVATION

Too many people seem to take their religious life for granted. They seem tacitly to assume that religion will take care of itself, very much like those elemental functions of the physical organism that proceed without the specific volitional acts of the individual. It is no disparagement of religion to recognize that it does not fall within the category of this kind of involuntary behavior. As a matter of fact, none of those interests and activities that go to make up the higher levels of human culture—all that which makes civilization—can be taken for granted. The great values of living can be ours only at the price of patient cultivation, earnest application, and exacting discipline.

Sometimes we seek to excuse ourselves from the responsibilities of active religious quest and service on the grounds of lack of interest. We say that we just do not seem to be interested in the Bible, or in going to church, or in Christian missions, or in community service. But if we take time to think it over, we shall see that no one

can afford to trust the guidance of his casual interests in the determining of habits and the shaping of character. Our interests are not a part of our native endowment which we either have or lack. Our interests are the fruit of selective choice and are themselves an indication of the quality of our living. There are probably few individuals who do not possess the capacity for understanding and appreciating fine literature and great music and creative art. But our experience clearly indicates that it is very easy for us to drift into lazy habits of satisfying our aesthetic appetite with superficial or even vicious ideas wrapped up in cheap and tawdry literary forms. It is easy for us to content ourselves with the sensually stimulating and the gaudily attractive and miss the spiritual stimulus and deeper satisfactions that come of the appreciation of the creative work of the masters of chisel and brush. It is easy to become accustomed to the exciting rhythms and harsh dissonances of the currently popular dance orchestra and never discover the splendor and glory of timeless music. If we are to lift living to the highest levels of aesthetic experience, we need definitely to cultivate our interest in the kind of literary and artistic forms that are of permanent worth.

In the First Letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul sets the standard for all worthy Christian endeavor in the language of the same athletic vernacular: “Do you not know that in a race, though all run, only one man gains the prize? Run so as to win the prize. Every athlete practices self-restraint all round; but while they do it to win a fading wreath, we do it for an unfading. Well, I run without swerving; I do not plant my blows upon the empty air—no, I maul and master my body, lest, after preaching to other people, I am disqualified myself” (1 Corinthians 9. 24-27). Clearly, it all depends upon what we want out of life. If we are content just to “get by,” that is one thing. But if we mean to “run so as to win the

prize," then that calls for a different quality of disciplined living.

The story is told about a former heavyweight champion who once went to a preacher friend and said, "I want you to tell me how I can get to be as strong inside as I have been outside." The preacher replied by asking, "How did you get strong outside?" After a moment's thought the prize fighter answered, "Why, by exercise." "That is the way to get strong inside, also," said the preacher. "It takes exercise." How can we ever learn how to pray effectively, unless we diligently and faithfully practice praying? How can we expect our boys and girls to become the financial supporters of the church when they are grown, unless we begin to train them, through the personal practice of stewardship in their early years? How shall we cultivate an interest in, and appreciation of, the incomparably rich resources for spiritual living in the Bible, unless we make ourselves familiar with the whole range of Scripture by diligent habits of Bible reading and study? How can we expect to awaken a vital interest in the Church, unless we set ourselves to seek opportunities for personal participation in its program and service? The Boy Scouts have hit upon a sound psychological principle in their adoption of the motto, "Do a good turn every day." It would be an excellent discipline for growing Christians if we would make it a point of honor never to let a day go by in which we failed to do at least some one particular act, just because we want to be Christians. We need to set ourselves to "train for the religious life."

"THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD"

Wise leaders in the Christian Church, a good long while ago, coined the phrase, "the practice of the presence of God." It very early became one of the primary functions of the Church to guide and help the men and women who became identified with the Christian fellowship in the quest for and the attainment of an experience of

God. Among all of the monastic orders of medieval Christianity, rather detailed directions were worked out and an elaborate discipline perfected by which serious-minded men and women might pursue this quest. It has not always been easy for men to keep their perspective. Whichever road we travel on our way to God becomes, in our sight, the primary thoroughfare. Sometimes one road to God has appeared to be the only possible highway, so heavy has the traffic grown, while other paths have been almost forgotten through disuse. It would be a good thing for us today if We Methodists would constantly remind ourselves that there have been many ways by which the spirits of men have come to God. And it is the peculiar function of religion to make articulate the divine nostalgia of men for God and to help them to understand the deeper meanings of the discoveries that they have made.

There are many minds who have traveled along the highway of knowledge and understanding. The search for truth, whatever its particular form may be, or into whatever areas of experience it may lead, is always essentially a search for God. It is an exploration of his characteristic habits of creative action and a discovery of the essential nature of his work. The eager, questioning mind, that comes upon a fresh discovery of how the universe is fashioned, or the manner of its operation, or that stumbles upon some new illuminating insight into the meaning and the relations of facts that have stood out in baffling irrational confusion until now, has had a veritable vision of God. And all our attempts to understand are fragmentary and incomplete until we begin to see each separate item of knowledge in its proper relationship to the total sum of living as one coherent system of meanings. It takes just this grasp of the whole that is the ultimate achievement of faith, a comprehensive view for which all the fragments of knowledge that we pick up in our hesitant groping amid the mysteries are never ade-

quate to give. It takes the leap of faith to see the whole. We need to read all of our knowledge about life in terms of these deeper religious meanings before it all makes sense and life becomes a splendid and glorious experience.

Then there is the way of aesthetic appreciation and of artistic self-expression. There seems to be, in the very structure of the universe, a persistent drive toward harmonious and balanced, rhythmic forms. And there is that within our human nature that responds to beauty and rhythm and harmony in the world outside. There is that which forever cries for some adequate means for creative self-expression. As nearly as we can understand the character of God, he is forever robed in beauty and splendor. Poetry, music, and art are of the very genius of Creative Spirit. He who has caught even a fleeting glimpse of the beauty that shines in all the handiwork of God, has seen the reflected glory of his face. He who has discovered, through some medium of craftsmanship, a means for giving the latent yearning of his human spirit self-expression in some tangible form of creative art, has in that high moment joined hands with God. It is the peculiar function of religion to make these dumb intimations of divine fellowship articulate in adoration and devoted service.

There is, further, the way of moral discipline. We human beings are made for fellowship and for co-operative social living. A solitary soul is an abnormal, a psychopathic individual. As long as there are lingering discords and disharmonies in our mutual relationships in society, we find ourselves possessed of a vast unease, a divine discontent. It is more fundamental than just our emotional frustration. We cannot escape the conviction that it has a cosmic reference. There is profound insight in the statement of the apostle that, "To this day, we know, the entire creation sighs and throbs with pain" (Romans 8. 22). "Even the creation waits with eager longing for the sons of God to be revealed" (Romans 8. 19). The structure of the universe is characterized by an

insistent drive toward a completely harmonious adjustment. Over and over in the experience of men we have seen it demonstrated that when men draw closer to one another, in bonds of sympathy, of understanding, of fellowship and co-operative social living, they become increasingly sensitive of the presence of the living God. There is a fine content, and a satisfaction that runs too deep for words, that comes upon a man who finds a place in the constructive work that ministers to human needs. When an individual's life "gears in" with the ongoing processes of society, he finds himself "at home." It is the function of religion to add the crowning touch to this content through the discovery that this sense of peace is God's benediction upon the life that fulfills His holy will. If we are to be genuinely Christian, we know that we cannot love God and not love our neighbor too. And we cannot dedicate our lives to unselfish human service without, by that very fact, entering into a divine comradeship. As men face those issues of conduct, in which they subordinate themselves and discipline their impulses to co-operative social living, they discover God.

We Methodists can remember that the class meeting and the midweek prayer meeting figured prominently in the experience of our fathers as helpful institutions by which they were guided in the cultivation of vital personal religion. John Wesley, in common with most of the serious-minded men and women of the eighteenth century, was accustomed to make a good deal out of setting aside stated hours each day for reading the Bible, for prayer, and for searching introspection and self-examination. Many of our fathers cultivated the habit of frequently ejaculating some brief prayer, such as "Lord, have mercy!" or "God help me!" or "Praise the Lord!" Many of us can remember the pattern of family worship that was common among our fathers and grandfathers. There were regular periods, sometimes once, and sometimes two or three times a day, when the whole family assembled.

Someone, usually father or mother, would read an extended passage from the Bible. There would be a rather lengthy prayer, or sometimes a round of prayers, each member of the family circle joining in with at least a brief petition. Sometimes there would be the common singing of a hymn. And sometimes there would be a period for serious conversation about religion.

The changing family situation, with increasing irregularity of working schedules that tend to disrupt the solidarity of family fellowship, has made it increasingly difficult to maintain the older forms of family devotion. The immediate response which greeted the appearance of *The Upper Room* is ample evidence that one of the primary reasons that We Methodists had so generally discontinued the habit of family worship was just that we did not know how it could be done today. A steadily increasing number of our Methodist fellowship have found this quarterly that is being published by the Board of Missions a practical guide to the re-establishment of family worship. Certainly, if we are to succeed in building substantial Christian foundations under our contemporary culture, we need to stabilize and strengthen the bonds of the home and family. Nowhere can we find a basis for a wholesome and enduring family fellowship except in a common faith which the family share together, and which forms the center around which family relationships are built.

At the same time that we have seen a quickening of interest in home religion we find many evidences of widespread concern for effective methods of cultivating personal religious experience. The Oxford groups have popularized such terms as the "quiet time," "guidance," and "sharing," which, upon examination, we discover are familiar practices in every period when Christian faith has been a vital and transforming power. Nothing helps more to give poise and a sense of adequacy to meet the day like setting apart a brief period in the morning, in which to read a short selection from the Bible, to sit

quietly and let its message find root in our thinking, and then a turning of our spirit toward God either in the repetition of some familiar form of prayer, or in the attempt to phrase our yearning and desire in our own extempore petition. A surprisingly large number of earnest-minded persons today are collecting in a pocket notebook their own personal manuals of prayer and meditation. One widely read author has worked out a definite pattern for guided meditation built somewhat after the form of the musical fugue. Another has suggested ways in which one may relax all the muscular and nervous tensions that exhaust our energies, and, after a definite effort to empty the mind of all specific thought content, fix the attention upon some object of meditation, like the face of Jesus.

Among the most promising evidences of the coming revival of religion are these indications of individual concern for the practice of religion. We Methodists have inherited a concern for vital religion. We won our name because of our insistence upon establishing regular habits of the practice of religion. We have often expressed our dismay at the trend toward the secularization of society. Secularism is nothing more than the attempt to live without reference to God. The only effective answer to secular living is a life that is saturated with sincere piety and disciplined by faithful habits of religious living.

“STEWARDS OF GOD’S VARIED GRACE”

The statement has often been made that the next revival of religion will be a revival of Christian Stewardship. Whenever we hear the word “stewardship” we are likely to make a wry face and think that now we must be on our guard. This is just another scheme to get people to give more money than they would ordinarily intend to pay. There is a good deal more to stewardship than just the mechanical device of a stated division of income and the payment of the tithe. But it might be a good thing to

take a moment and look the money question squarely in the face. Why is it that we always seem to be so sensitive upon that point? A physician, seeking to diagnose the disease from which a patient is suffering, will always tell you that when he strikes a place on the patient's body where he is particularly sensitive to pain, he knows that he is not far from the root of the difficulty. We cannot escape the conviction that we are not far from the mark when we recognize in our attitude toward money and property the root of the malady from which society as well as individuals are suffering today.

It is certainly true that at no point is the business world inclined to scrutinize the habits of a man so closely as at the point of his use of money. What are his habits of personal expenditure? How does he regard money belonging to others that is entrusted to his care? What are his policies in the administration of whatever capital funds he has in his possession? What is his record in meeting and keeping financial obligations? The money test is an ever-present and an ever-searching test. We need not be surprised that, when we turn to the New Testament, we find that the spotlight of penetrating criticism is focused sharply upon the economic relationships of men. Some of the most uncompromising of the "hard" sayings of Jesus are directed at this problem. They are "hard" sayings primarily because we have been unwilling to believe that Jesus could have meant what the plain intent of the words seems to indicate he must have meant. To accept them at face value, to take Jesus in sober earnest, would mean to produce a revolution in the structure and practice of society.

It is a question that goes a good deal farther than just the matter of the measure of our sharing in the support of the enterprise of the church. We might pause just a moment for a word or two upon that point. "Where your treasure lies," said Jesus, "your heart will lie there too." One of the surest indicators of the dominant interest of

any life is the character of the man's expenditures. What are we going to say for ourselves when someone points out that we seem prone to give expenditures for personal pleasure, investments that promise a substantial profit, the obligations of social clubs, the purchase of goods that contribute to our personal comfort or increase the luxury of our living—all these temporal things—precedence over any obligation that we acknowledge to support the church? Is there any better guide to what we reckon of most importance than to ask what are the items that are given first consideration in the expenditure of our money, and what are the items that are left to the last, or pushed aside? If we honestly mean to give God and the Church first place in our lives, then we shall need to work out some definite systematic method for determining what should be our share in acknowledging the priority of religion in the administration of our means. So far as we have been able to observe, no one has yet suggested any better rule to follow than the practice that has been approved by the tested experience of Christian people from the beginning, of beginning by a dedication of a tithe.

It is the principle that applies to the whole basis of our living with which we are concerned here. The taproot, both of our individual tragedy and of the malady that lays waste society, is an elemental, atomistic selfishness. The curse that lies like a blight upon all our economic relationships is the competitive ruthlessness of antagonistic, divisive self-interest that refuses to recognize any higher law than the drive of greed for individual profit. The source, both of governmental inefficiency and of the flagrant corruption that has made municipal administration in America an incorrigible scandal, is just this attitude that looks upon public office, not in terms of a trust to be administered with fidelity and efficiency, but as an opportunity to further one's personal ambitions or enhance one's private gains. The blight has extended to the

rank and file of citizenship. It is a common practice to regard any private advantage that can be won at public expense as thoroughly legitimate. The average citizen looks upon such common social obligations as the payment of taxes, jury service, respect for traffic rules, and police regulations as so many onerous burdens to be evaded whenever convenient. It is clear that we shall never find a solution of the evils that beset our attempt to build a Christian commonwealth until we develop a totally new attitude toward the responsibilities of social living.

Shortly before he surrendered his editorial pen to take up the duties of president of the University of Wisconsin, Dr. Glenn Frank wrote a notable series of editorials for the *Century Magazine*. In this series he pleaded that what we need is the development of a high ethical sense of trusteeship or stewardship in business and in industrial relationships, comparable to the ethical ideals that have been accepted in such professions as medicine and education. This is the crux of the ideal of Christian Stewardship. We may well question whether we shall make any substantial beginning in the creation of a new quality of Christlike character and the development of institutions in which the spirit of Jesus can find corporate expression, until we begin by such a dedication of individual persons to Christ as will find immediate expression in the faithful stewardship of income and of property.

We Methodists must be in earnest about our discipleship to Jesus. We must set our own individual house in order. If we are to hope to succeed in the tremendous superhuman task of making Christian the life of this world, we must begin in our own lives to generate a new quality of spiritual living. We must make our discipleship to Jesus the primary quality in our daily living. We must set ourselves to "train for the religious life."

VI

WE MUST EVANGELIZE

METHODISM was born in a religious revival. John Wesley got the primary impetus, that sent him forth into nearly sixty years of incessant itinerancy, out of an experience that brought to him a fresh and vivid sense of the saving grace and mercy of God. Through his whole life he moved as a man with one dominant purpose, "that I might by all means save some."

EVANGELISM CONSTITUTED THE TOTAL PROGRAM OF EARLY METHODISM

Early Methodist preachers accepted as a cardinal principle of homiletics that every sermon preached should contain a complete statement of the plan of salvation. A preacher must, in every sermon he preached, seek to produce conviction of sin, awaken a desire to repent, point out the way to redemption, and press home the imperative need for immediate decision. There were certain to be at least a few souls present who might never have another opportunity to hear the call of God. The preacher must deliver his own soul of his responsibility to sound the note of warning and open the door of promise. This vastly simplified the problem of preaching. There was just one primary objective. Every sermon was an evangelistic sermon.

The program of the Church was equally simple. When a Methodist minister reached his field after Conference his first task was to map out the schedule of "protracted meetings" for the year. Each point on the circuit must be given attention. By the time a man had laid out and carried through a plan for from six to ten weeks of evangelistic preaching on each point of his circuit and made

provision for camp meetings in the summer months, the year's program was pretty well filled out. One of the principal reasons that led to the relatively short tenure of pastoral appointments, in the beginnings of Methodism, was this fact that the task of the minister was so largely conceived in terms of evangelism. Each minister was sent out to press with all his might the appeal of the gospel and summon men to repentance and salvation. When one man had had a year or two, or at most three years, upon a given field, he would obviously have exhausted his resources in evangelistic appeal. The appointment was changed on the expectation that a fresh voice and a new approach might succeed where the other man had failed. The primary business of the Church was evangelism.

By evangelism we mean the presentation of the call of God to men; the enforcement of the preacher's understanding of the will and purpose of God, so as to awaken a conviction of sin; the definition of the terms upon which the mercy of God was available for the salvation of men, and the pressing of the invitation to repentance leading to conversion and reception into the membership of the Church. Quite generally it was conceived that conversion marked the culmination of the process. Once the preacher had brought men and women to the altar in sincere penitence and helped them to "pray through" to surrender and an "experience of religion" the work was complete.

" 'Tis done: the great transaction's done,
I am my Lord's, and he is mine."

There were not lacking, of course, thoughtful leaders and observers who marked the discouraging fact that every revival was followed by a distressing amount of "backsliding." A certain proportion of those who had "experienced religion" later "lost their experience." The way to meet this situation, as our fathers saw it, was to trust that a subsequent revival would restore the backslider to

a state of grace. One who had become converted was expected to press on toward the experience of Christian perfection. Every revival included invitations to those who wished to seek this further experience. This became one of the primary objectives of the camp meeting. In the main this "second blessing" was sought in essentially the same manner in which men sought the first assurance of God's mercy. While the Church engaged in a number of other minor activities, for our fathers evangelism practically encompassed the range of its interest and objective.

EVANGELISM IN THE PROGRAM OF THE CHURCH TODAY

Today the scene has changed. There are some areas in the Church where most of the traditional patterns of evangelistic procedure are still at least formally observed. There are occasional individual ministers or churches that continue to use the method of mass evangelistic appeal and seek to reproduce the revival forms of religious experience. There has been, however, quite generally over the Church a sharp subsidence of enthusiasm for, and faith in, the evangelistic methods and objectives to which our fathers gave themselves with such intense devotion.

Perhaps this in part grows out of the fact that we have come to hold a more adequate conception of what is involved in real evangelism. One of the reasons for the universal efficacy of the older revival methods was the fact that there was quite general agreement about what constituted a religious experience and about the issues upon which decision for or against Christian living turned. Today it is not anywhere nearly so easy to define what we mean by becoming a Christian. The revolutionary social changes that have accompanied the increasing mechanization of the process of society, have brought us into an era of confused and bewildered thinking. It is not nearly so easy to define in a few sharply etched dramatic figures what Christian living means. The very educational processes upon which we have come increasingly

to depend are, if they are rightly conceived, evangelistic in their ultimate objective.

We have come, too, to a better perspective in our estimate of the relative value of emotion, understanding, and purpose in defining Christian character. The older revival method inevitably tended to give an exaggerated importance to sheer emotional excitement. Perhaps, today, we are in danger of swinging to the opposite extreme of discounting emotion altogether. But, on the whole, we do possess a much more adequate understanding of the psychological mechanisms by which character comes to maturity. We have, as we have already observed, an enhanced appreciation of the importance of integrating the individual in a vital fellowship. This is an essential element in the process of salvation. And this building of the individual into a vital fellowship entails our giving attention to a wide variety of interests and activities around which and through which such fellowship is built. We do not cherish the naïve confidence in the complete adequacy of one momentary experience, in which the issues of Christian versus non-Christian living come to a dramatic climax, that was characteristic of our fathers' understanding of religion. Perhaps we have lost something that we can ill afford to lose in our shifting of the focus of attention from the experience of conversion. Certainly, we have made immense strides forward in our understanding of all that must be involved in discipleship to Jesus.

With all of this we need to remind ourselves anew that the whole process of Christian character building roots down in a fundamental commitment of the individual mind and will. Whatever the method by which we shall proceed, it will fall short of the mark unless it comes to grips with the basic motivation of living and drives home toward a definite decision. It is an essential element in the process to develop the emotional drive adequate to crystallize convictions into decisive action. This is the

heart of evangelism. And this must continue to represent the major objective of the program of the church. There are in every community men and women who have never understood clearly what it means to be a Christian. It must be our task to guide them into that understanding and then arouse them to the imperative necessity of making their personal commitment to Christ.

The method of our evangelism will continue to be, as it has always been, as varied as is human nature. In our thought about evangelism we have ordinarily had the revival method in mind as the normal manner of approach to the problem of winning the lost to Christ. Its dramatic qualities, the excitement that almost inevitably accompanied it, the sheer impact of massed numbers of people, the lure of what seem to be the striking successes registered in large numbers of converts reported as its results—all these tend to give the revival method an exaggerated importance in our thinking. On the other hand, some of the unhappy experiences that we have associated with the revival method—the grotesque, bizarre publicity methods often used to attract the crowd, the crude vulgarisms that have become almost standard evangelistic patter, the undisciplined denunciations in which evangelists so often indulge, the morbid exhibitionism that frequently appears under the form of testimonies of Christian experience, the methods of massed coercion that all too many times have been used to herd people in large numbers to the altar, the superficial manner in which decisions are often indicated, the manner in which evangelistic preaching has been linked with extreme forms of theological ideas and Biblical interpretations, the distressingly large number of “converts” who fail to make good in consistent stabilized Christian character and active churchmanship—all this has tended to make the revival suspect in many communities. Having dismissed the revival, too often we have concluded that evangelism itself is an outgrown

method and must be eliminated from the program of the church.

A few years since a good deal of publicity was given to what was heralded as a new method of evangelism, that of personal visitation. Quite a number of men have launched out into the field of professional evangelism who have specialized in the development of a kind of mass visitation. These visitation campaigns have produced very creditable results. Every minister knows that there has never been a period when the most constructive evangelistic results did not come from some kind of individual personal appeal. This has been the heart of the pastoral ministry of every effective pastor. There have been any number of churches all through the years in which groups of laymen have quietly and consistently, right through the year, under the guidance of the pastor, gone out on a still hunt for souls. We have had times when we have been treated to earnest exhortations to organize the church for "educational evangelism." It is one of the major objectives of the teaching ministry of the church to awaken the minds of men and women and of growing children and youth to an understanding of the meaning of Christian faith and life. Decision Day, in some form or other, has become a standard item in the program of every efficient church.

What we need today is not the devising of new methods of evangelism so much as the focusing of the whole program of the Church in all its varied forms of activity upon this primary objective. To anyone who has thought at all seriously about the implications of the method of massed appeal by which the totalitarian States have organized popular support, there must have come a new appreciation of the value of emotional appeals to massed groups of men and women. There is a place for evangelistic preaching. We need a new type of evangelistic preaching; a preaching that has broken free from the grave clothes of a vocabulary and thought patterns that

are increasingly alien to the habits of thinking of men and women in ordinary life; a preaching that is intelligently aware of the areas of contemporary life in which the "hot spots" of acute concern are focused; a preaching that is guided and governed by a thorough understanding of the psychological mechanisms of religious experience: but a preaching, withal, characterized by a fine appreciation of the values represented in the timeless faith of the Church, and fired by an intense concern to win men and women to the Christian life.

We need to press on in the development of our programs of education, with all of our teaching made dynamic by the objective of leading men to a definite decisive experience of wholehearted commitment to Jesus Christ. We need to continue to pursue the search for men through personal visitation, a visitation in which pastor and people share, an individual, personal approach that will take advantage of every contact that may be developed, through the manifold activities in which men and women are associated in the program of the church today. "Which of you," said Jesus, "with a hundred sheep, if he loses one, does not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and *go after the lost one till he finds it?*" Evangelism is still the primary business of the church.

DOES IT MATTER?

One thing stands out clear. Our fathers were possessed of an urgent sense of the imperative necessity of their evangelistic mission. We find this note of urgency carried over in the language of the eighteenth century in some of the "Rules for a Preacher's Conduct" that have been preserved in the *Discipline* of the former Methodist Episcopal Church: "You have nothing to do but to save souls; therefore spend and be spent in this work. . . . Observe! it is not your business only to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society, but to save as many

as you can. . . . How can you walk and talk, and be merry with such people, when you know their case? When you look them in the face, you should break forth into tears, as the prophet did when he looked upon Hazeel, and then set upon them with most vehement exhortations. Oh, for God's sake, and the sake of poor souls, bestir yourselves, and spare no pains that may conduce to their salvation!"

Over against this we might set a remark that was made not long ago about the preaching of a man of considerable note in America: "He preached as though it did not matter much." This probes to the heart of the problem. We had better put it bluntly: *Do we believe that it matters whether men and women are Christians or not?* When we think it through, it becomes a much more personal and critical matter. The question becomes, *Does it matter whether we ourselves continue to be Christian or not?* If we are to judge of what Christian living ought to mean today by what it has meant in the past, this has been an invariable characteristic of vital Christianity in every generation. It is of the essence of the Christian experience that the individual who shares in the spirit of Jesus accepts, not only the obligation "to seek and to save that which is lost," but the eager joy of sharing the blessed discovery of God and the assurance of mercy and grace that our faith has brought to us, with everyone whom he can persuade to commit himself to our Christ. "As the Father sent me forth, I am sending you forth," is the word of the fourth Evangelist. Evangelism is the heart of Christianity.

Perhaps part of the explanation of our weakened sense of the imperative urgency of the evangelistic mission has grown out of the revolt of the modern mind against the gruesome pictures of the irrevocable fate of the lost that we have been told were the basis of evangelistic appeals a generation or more ago. We do not believe in any literal "lake of fire" in which the wicked are doomed to

an eternity of inextinguishable torment. This so-called revolt against orthodoxy has, we are confident, been heavily overworked. Jonathan Edwards' sermon, "Sinners in the hands of an angry God," is due for a long, long vacation. It is a fair question whether such extravagantly morbid portrayals of the fate of the damned ever functioned anywhere nearly as commonly in actual evangelistic appeals as they have been made to serve as alibis for our indifference to and evasion of the obligation to evangelize.

It ought to be sufficient to remind ourselves how impossible it is to find any adequate expression for the deeper meanings of experience without resorting to picture language and poetic imagery. Some of the most significant truths about life elude expression in any other medium than symbolic imagery. When we recognize the true character of the vivid descriptions which we find, in the New Testament, of "the lake of fire," we can understand the essential truth in the sharp antithesis that they strike between the way of life and the way of death. It might help us if we would remember that "Gehenna," or The Valley of Hinnom, was the site of the city dump of old Jerusalem. Here they brought the waste of the city to be dumped and burned. The changing circumstances that the years have brought, and the variations in habits of thinking that set modern men apart from their fathers, have not altered the fact that there are ways of living that ultimately lead to the utter ruin of human personality. If we will look around us with eyes that are open to see the most obvious features of our contemporary scene, we can discover an abundance of illustration of the same kind of fearful human wastage of which the Gospels sought to post a solemn warning.

We have often been told that religion, to our fathers, was conceived largely in terms of a means of guaranteeing admission to an eternity of bliss beyond the grave. It is probable that we are inclined today to underestimate the

extent to which the thought of the average man and woman is occupied with the problem of life after death. In spite of all the delights that we think to find in day-by-day experience, death is an omnipresent factor in the life of everyone. It is rare that an individual comes even to the threshold of maturity without having stood at least once before an open grave. We only need to remind ourselves of the persistent appeal of spiritualism and the widespread popularity of fraternal orders, whose ritual is largely built around the problem of immortality, to realize that this is a universal interest. There is no doubt that to our fathers one of the primary meanings of being "lost" was the forfeiture of any hope of renewing the bonds of fellowship that have been broken by physical death. To be "saved" was to be assured that those intimate human relationships in which men and women had found the most precious meanings were guaranteed.

This problem is still with us today. We may seek the solution in a somewhat different fashion than did our fathers; but some solution we must find if life is to be reckoned livable. It is plain that the mere assurance of the continuance of conscious existence after death alone will never satisfy this persistent hunger of the human spirit. It would be difficult to conceive a hell more terrible than to doom men and women to continue to live on forever and forever in the same spirit of bitter antagonisms and fear and frustration that is all the life many have ever known. It is a new quality of living here and now that we must find. The one thing that makes a hopeful outlook toward death the only rational attitude for men and women is a life whose character embodies such immeasurable value that it is impossible to conceive an intelligible universe in which that kind of life ever could come to an end. A genuinely Christlike life is the only unanswerable evidence in our argument with death.

Among the "consolations of religion" which our fathers prized, and which they felt were guaranteed by the experi-

ence of salvation, was a sense of belonging to God. There is a peculiarly poignant phrase in the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of John. "I will not leave you comfortless" is the familiar version. The Greek word is "orphanos." It means, literally, "orphaned." That is exactly what many men and women feel about their position in this universe. In the vast immensity that we have begun vaguely to understand the physical cosmos to be, what place can there be for the minute concerns of such infinitesimal particles of organic matter as human beings are? Add to this the increasing tendency to catch men and women up in economic structures that run on their relentless way without regard to the hopes or fears or interests or desires of any of the unimportant human cog-wheels that make up the impersonal mechanism of modern industry, and modern man becomes in a double sense a spiritual "orphan." In the face of such a situation it makes all the difference in the world to know and trust "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It makes all the difference in the world whether men and women accept the impersonality of things or whether they dedicate their lives to the achievement and conservation of those human values, for themselves and for their neighbors, that have made life worth while.

If we should judge by most of the standards by which we would ordinarily estimate the adequacy of any generation to face life, our generation ought to have ranked unusually high in the scale. We have had more tangible wealth at our disposal than any generation that has ever lived. We have had more material resources within our reach. We have had the finest equipment in mechanical plant and tools with which to do the world's work that men have ever seen. We have more knowledge at our disposal, tested, organized, systematized, available to deal with any emergency. We know more things about more things than any generation that has ever lived. We ought

to have been able to face life with confidence, to measure up splendidly to its demands, to have provided an abundance to meet all human needs and ample security against unforeseen emergencies. We ought to have found in the experience of living a sense of challenge and achievement, an overflowing joy in living and a sustaining confidence that the whole enterprise is supremely worth the while. But when we look around us at our superficial, secular way of living, we find, instead of confidence, bewilderment; instead of security, a haunting fear that the best that we can do will never be quite enough; instead of abundant living, stark starvation and bitter want; instead of a sense of achievement and worth, a haunting feeling of futility, and boredom, and despair.

Ours is a secular civilization. That is to say, ours is a civilization in which we have undertaken to meet all the demands of living without any reference to God. We have left God out. Having left God out, we find ourselves drifting on from moment to moment, trying to squeeze out of each passing instant the last possible drop of nervous excitement and sensuous satisfaction that it contains, without reckoning whether our way of living fits into any pattern of genuine value and worth. Having left God out, we find our lives increasingly organized around a variety of mutually antagonistic, divisive, selfish interests undisciplined by any overruling sovereignty of divine purpose. The poor shabby human substitutes for God, our petty loyalties to economic interest, to social caste, to nationalistic ambitions or to ideals of race or blood, are driving us headlong toward a terrible catastrophe of destructive violence. In the light of what is happening in our world today it is becoming increasingly clear that there is nothing can ever matter unless we commit our lives in trust and obedience to God.

Nothing else in all the world can matter anywhere nearly as much as this. "This is life eternal, that they

know thee, the only real God, and him whom thou hast sent, even Jesus Christ" (John 17. 3). This is our business in this world, to make men and women acquainted with God through Jesus Christ. Nothing else that we can ever do will matter much if we fail in that. *If we are to continue to be Christians at all, we must evangelize.*

VII

OUR TEACHING TASK

THE earliest group, from which We Methodists are lineally descended, to bear the name, "Methodist," was a group of college boys who met in their rooms in the dormitory of Oxford University. The guiding genius of that college club was a man who, for a number of years, held a minor position on the teaching staff of the university. With that kind of ancestry, We Methodists could not be indifferent to Our Teaching Task.

THE EDUCATIONAL INTERESTS OF EARLY METHODISTS

We have ordinarily thought of John Wesley primarily as an evangelist and an administrator. We can never do complete justice to his many-sided character unless we remember that there was always a good deal of the school-master about him too. His preaching led him, as we have seen, into those areas of British life that had been denied most of the social privileges that make for a rich and satisfying culture. The conditions under which laboring men were employed, in the years when the factory system was developing in England, were rigorous in the extreme. British society has never gone as far as we have, in the United States, in providing opportunity for education for the common masses. Most of the people to whom John Wesley preached had had limited if any educational advantages. It became one of the prime objects of his ministry to bring within the reach of the poor and underprivileged masses of industrial England the best that was available in print. He was a pioneer in adult education.

Almost with the opening of his evangelistic ministry he began to edit and publish abridged editions of books

covering a wide range of subjects of popular interest. These were put out in handy pocket size. It has been said that, with one exception, Wesley never consented to any volume, published under his direction, appearing in a form too large to be slipped easily into one's pocket. The books were published so as to sell at the most for a few pennies each. The preachers, as they went around their circuits, were commissioned to push the circulation of these books and tracts. The founder of Methodism was determined that the books he published should be read. Most of the subjects treated dealt with religion. But many of them were reprints of literary classics and volumes dealing with a wide variety of practical matters. One of the most popular was a volume on home remedies for common ills. We may smile at some of the items it contained; but we cannot fail to respect the purpose of a man who set himself so indefatigably to feed the minds and minister to the practical everyday needs of men.

The Wesleyan Revival was intimately related to the beginnings of the Sunday school. When we remember that part of the activity of the club of Oxford students, who were first called Methodists, was to gather the children of destitute families of the neighborhood into classes, where they were taught the rudiments of general education, and the elements of Christian faith and experience, we can understand why Wesley gave such vigorous support to Robert Raikes. Throughout the whole history of Methodism the Sunday school has been an integral part of the program of the Church.

Methodism began, as an organized movement, with the formation of bands or societies which met weekly for the mutual cultivation of vital religious experience. These larger groups were later divided into relatively small cell-like units, called classes. The classes were first devised as a simple practical method of collecting funds for the debt on the property at Bristol. Soon, however, they found other uses. The class leader would question each

member of the class in turn about the state of his religious experience. Practical problems concerning personal habits and the relationships between members of the society came up for review. Those who were conscious of having transgressed their ideal found emotional relief in confession to this circle of intimate, understanding friends. The class drew stronger the bonds of fellowship around weak and wavering spirits, re-enforcing their feeble efforts toward the shining goal of the perfect life. These Methodist classes and societies became tremendously influential educational instruments, fostering the growth of individuals toward the ripened maturity of Christlike character. Thus, even though unwittingly, these early Methodists were engaged, from the beginning, in the teaching task.

Similarly, the calling of the Methodist itinerant preachers to Annual Conferences had a definite educational objective. The Established Church persisted in disowning the movement initiated by the Wesleys. Only a very few of their intimate personal friends would have anything to do with the Methodist societies. The converts of the Revival were not welcomed at the services of the State Church. Increasingly, as the movement grew, Wesley felt the need of assistants. While at first he rebelled against the idea of using lay preachers, in the end he had to yield his objections. Ordination was conditioned upon graduation from one of the universities controlled by the Church. Few of the men who became Methodist preachers had either the means or the social standing to gain access to the university. Wesley had to take them, as they were, untrained and unordained.

He might be content to take men as he found them; but he was not satisfied to leave them so. He immediately set about equipping them for their ministry. We are accustomed to think of the Annual Conference as primarily a business meeting. The minutes of those early gatherings of Methodist preachers read more like the

records of preachers' institutes or of coaching conferences. They were presided over by an inexorable schoolmaster. He insisted that these men do their utmost to prepare themselves for their task. He required them to become close and unwearying students. He laid out, as the agenda of the Conferences, a series of questions that probed the acute issues of doctrine, of polity, and of practical church administration, which the preachers would be called upon to face. The Conferences became a major instrument in the fulfillment of Methodism's teaching task.

EDUCATION AND EVANGELISM

We have had, so often, to face the suggestion that there is some incompatibility between the educational method and the objectives and process of evangelism, that we had better take a little time, here, to think about it. We would find little argument upon the point that the chief object of all the work of the Church must always be the salvation of men. The only justification for our engaging in either education or evangelism is that it contributes toward that end. When we begin to inquire what is involved in the process of salvation, we find at least two essential elements that are distinctively educational in character.

If an individual is to be reached and won to a Christian decision, he will need to have made clear to him the general character of Christlikeness. One trouble with many of our attempts at evangelism is that we are content simply to repeat old familiar generalizations. We plead with men to become Christians; but we do not make clear just what we mean by being a Christian. The process of leading men and women to think through until they come to a clear and definite understanding of just what is meant by the Christian way of living is clearly an educational process. In the main, the men and women who are won to Christian decision and enlistment in the fellowship of

the church by our evangelistic efforts are the individuals who have already been interested and have become more or less active participants in the program of the church. The constructive, sustained, year-round processes of education are constantly preparing the ground for the successful evangelistic appeal.

The second condition of success in evangelism is the arousing of adequate motivation for action. It is not enough, just to know what one ought to do. We must discover the springs of action, and arouse a sufficiently powerful emotional drive to make effective our understanding of the ideal that we would seek to attain. This is the primary object of evangelism. It finds its place definitely in any adequate program of education. Our education is not complete until it has found fruit in definite decision and firmly established habits of behavior. The distinctive function of an evangelistic sermon is to awaken the emotional drive to impel men and women, already convinced in their minds, to act upon the convictions that they have accepted. Evangelism is part and parcel of the total educational process of building Christian character.

We have ordinarily associated evangelism with some kind of dramatic crisis experience. It is just this crisis experience that is most often set over against the educational method to the disparagement of one or the other. When we study the records of evangelism, we soon discover that the character of the crisis, in which evangelism normally culminates, varies according to the varying types of temperament of the persons involved, according to differences in antecedent experience, and according to the varied character of the situations in which the religious experience of individuals comes to a decisive issue. The test that finally validates a conversion experience is, not the degree of emotional excitement that characterizes it, nor the relative dramatic quality of the crisis in which it culminates, but the character and quality of

living that follows after. Sometimes we have thought of religious education as a means of preparing the way for the evangelistic appeal that produces the crisis experience of conversion. It would be a still better way of thinking about it if we conceived conversion as integrally a part of the processes of education; and if we were guided in our direction of the training of men and women and the leading of them to the decisive moment by sound principles of educational procedure. We need to conceive the total program of the Church in terms of a comprehensive educational process aimed at the development of Christlike personalities in a Christlike society. We need constantly to give point and drive to all of our educational efforts by keeping sharply defined in our thinking the objective of winning men and women to decisive commitment to Christ and the Christian way of living. This is Our Teaching Task.

THE TEACHING TASK OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

We Methodists have been actively engaged in promoting Christian education through the Sunday schools ever since the beginning. The relatively simple curriculum, which consisted largely of a selected text of Scripture which all ages in the school studied together, has grown and expanded with the development of our ideas of what ought to be included in the training of growing Christians. The curriculum of Christian education in the local church has been rewritten again and again, following the best educational principles of life-centered or pupil-centered approach. This does not mean that we have relegated the Bible to a secondary place. The Bible continues, and will always continue to be, the primary resource upon which we draw. The objective, in our present-day teaching materials, is directly to guide the student to go to the Bible and to help him learn how he can use the Bible in seeking the solution of the critical problems of daily living. Altogether the result is that we are coming

to a more intelligent understanding of the Bible, and we are giving those who share in the educational discipline of the Church an acquaintance with a far wider range of Scripture than was possible with the older method. No finer body of teaching materials exists than we find in the closely graded lessons which we have provided for our graded church schools.

Perhaps the most significant and promising phase of the educational enterprise of Methodism is the program that has been developed for young people in the Church. We shared, with other denominations, the awakening concern for youth which led, nearly two generations ago, to the organization of such young people's societies as the Baptist Young People's Union, the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, and the Epworth League. In its initial stages the appeal to youth brought young people together in mass conventions and stirred them with appeals like that of the Student Volunteers, who set forth the daring challenge, "The Evangelization of the World in This Generation." Today our young people are responding with equal enthusiasm to a restatement of essentially the same summons to adventurous Christian service, "Christian Youth Building a New World." Between twenty and thirty years ago the older type of youth conventions began to give way before the idea of summer camps and institutes, which have spread across the country until there is not a Conference in Methodism but has one or more such gatherings of young people. Within the last half dozen years we have been turning again to larger assemblies. The organization of the National Council of Methodist Youth marked the coming of age of a real youth movement in the Church. No one who has had any contact with these gatherings of clear seeing, hard thinking, enthusiastic, adventurous Christian youth can fail to have his faith in the future of the Church renewed. For a generation we have been praying for another great revival of religion. In this rapidly devel-

oping Christian movement among the young people of America of high-school and college age we have a veritable revival already in full swing.

While the first attempt of Methodist people to establish a church-related college, Cokesbury College in Maryland, did not prove successful, we have never lost our concern for higher education. In state after state, with the expansion of population across the continent, Methodists led the van in building academies, colleges, and universities. With the development of state-supported institutions, offering college training with little or no tuition cost to students who enroll, the problem of the maintenance of the church-related college became increasingly difficult. For a time, under the pressure of the demands of standardizing agencies, and the intense competition for students, the church-related college seemed compelled to attempt to copy the pattern set by the state university and to minimize the distinctively religious character of its objectives. More recently, however, even in the face of multiplying economic problems, the Church is beginning to rediscover her vocation in the field of higher education.

The state school is bedeviled from two directions. On the one hand the educator who undertakes to direct a tax-supported institution finds himself at the mercy of rival political organizations struggling for possession of the privileges of power. His once boasted economic security has been rendered increasingly precarious by the mounting burdens that have been heaped upon government, and the increasing restiveness of the population under steadily growing burdens of taxation. The increasingly acute social and economic tensions have rendered politically-minded leaders sensitive to every element in the educational program that threatens to disturb the established order in society. A completely disinterested and honestly objective criticism of political and economic institutions, indispensable to a thoroughly scientific approach to life, has become more and more difficult.

Today, outside of the church-related college, it is difficult to point to an area in which there remains real academic freedom, even in America.

On the other hand, the state schools have been forced, by popular demands, to become increasingly more and more like immense trade schools. They provide unexcelled facilities for sharpening wits, accumulating information, developing skills, teaching crafts—everything, in fact, except the one thing that is indispensable to worthy human living: that is a sense of ultimate meanings, an appreciation of real values, and a fundamental attitude of reverence and respect for truth and worth that is the fruit of a vital faith. It takes more than a mere variegated assortment of curious and interesting bits of knowledge to equip one to face life. It requires more than skill in handling the interesting and complicated mechanisms of modern industrial society. It calls for more than a certain degree of resourcefulness in finding new and stimulating forms of diversion and amusement. It calls for the discovery of, and commitment of one's soul wholeheartedly to, a supreme object of devotion. Only an educational curriculum that is directly related to, and geared into, a consistent system of faith in the ultimate values that give life worth is adequate as a preparation for living. Amid the bewilderment and confusion that has overtaken so many men today, there emerges afresh the challenge to the Church to pioneer in a program of genuinely creative higher education.

With the rethinking of the curriculum of Christian education there has come a development and enrichment in the variety of forms through which the educational process finds expression. To the familiar Sunday school we have added such items as the Daily Vacation School, the Weekday School, teacher-training or leadership-training classes, church-night classes, Sunday-evening forums, and a wide variety of study and discussion groups. The drama and various forms of creative self-expression have

come to take their place alongside the traditional methods of direct instruction. The growing interest of the Church in her youth has led us out onto the campuses of the tax-supported colleges and universities where, through the Wesley Foundation, we have been striving to make the program of the Church just as challenging to these thousands of Methodist young people in their college years as we hope it will continue to be in the later years of their maturity.

Since the days when John Wesley called the first Annual Conference, We Methodists have never ceased to insist upon the importance of a trained ministry. In the face of raw frontier conditions, and the practical necessity of depending upon relatively untrained men for ministerial leadership, the Church sought, through the development of a course of study, administered through the Conferences, to provide a means for training the circuit riders, even as they rode their circuits. Later, through a Commission created by the General Conference, and a department set up within the Board of Education, and through summer schools both for undergraduates and for men who had completed the course of study, we have striven to increase the effectiveness of this method of training. Meanwhile, for over a hundred years, We Methodists have been developing, in strategically located centers across the land, a series of graduate schools of theology, which now are recognized as equal to any ministerial training schools anywhere. An increasing number of our young men, and young women, who are offering themselves as candidates for the Methodist ministry and other forms of Christian leadership, are receiving, in these schools, preparation comparable to that which is generally required for such similar professions as medicine, engineering, law, and education.

The early Methodist preachers were book agents as well as evangelists. Out of the determination of John Wesley to provide good reading within the reach of the poorest

member of a Methodist society, has come The Methodist Publishing House. This has now become the largest co-operative publishing house in the world. The Methodist minister continues to be the principal agent for the distribution of its product. This service he offers as a labor of love. The only way in which any minister of our connection ever shares in any dividends of The Methodist Publishing House is to live long enough to retire. We Methodists may be rightly proud that, from the produce of our publishing interests, we have been able to provide more than ten million dollars toward the support of the retired ministers and their dependents. One of the principal products of the Publishing House has been the family of *Christian Advocates*. We possess no more effective instrument for education and evangelism than this group of weekly periodicals established across the Church and circulating regularly through the homes of our constituency. Thus we have sought to enlist the resources of the printed page as an invaluable implement in the discharge of Our Teaching Task.

VIII

RADICAL RELIGION

CHRISTIANITY has always claimed to be a "radical" religion. It proposes to strike directly at the root of the malady that afflicts men and society. It undertakes to effect a radical reconstruction both of individual character and of the spirit and the institutions of society. So completely radical is its proposal that the author of the *Gospel of John* could think of no term adequate to describe it except to call it a complete "new birth." Becoming a Christian was like going back to the original germ cells and beginning the whole process of life over again. "Except a man be born again," the familiar version has it, "he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3. 3, A. V.). The apostle Paul shared the same point of view. "There is a new creation whenever a man comes to be in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5. 17). This is radical religion beyond any question.

THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

One of the primary issues that cuts athwart all the main currents of life today is that which concerns the relative significance of the individual and the group. Here it is that we find the major conflict between the social philosophy of both Fascism and Communism, and the social philosophy that underlies the Christian idea, both of the individual and of society.

A century ago the insistent demand that the individual be given primary recognition marked the direction of human progress. Today we find ourselves in the full tide of a reaction that insists that the way of advance points in the opposite direction. We are thinking and speaking with increasing appreciation of the values of collective

action. "Rugged individualism" and *laissez faire*, that once were identifying characters of political and economic emancipation, are slogans that we associate today with reactionary political and economic programs. When we venture to speak on behalf of a return to a fresh consideration of the importance of the individual as the focus for the attention of religion, we are not forgetting the social implications of the gospel. The religion of Jesus *does* have inescapable implications for social action.

Whenever individuals are compelled to live and seek their livelihood under conditions that breed bitterness and resentment in their hearts toward any of their brother men; whenever persons find their outlook so hemmed in and shrouded by insecurity and hopelessness that it is difficult to keep alive a spirit of confidence and hope; whenever the circumstances under which men and women have to live are such as to affront the elemental decencies, and rob them of self-respect and a high sense of human worth; whenever men and women find themselves, by the character of the social and economic system in which they are involved, denied the possibility of securing the material resources needed to provide them with a wholesome and abundant life; whenever the kind of situation into which human beings are thrust is of such a character as to make it difficult for them to cherish reverence or respect for life, or confidence in truth, or trust in God—then religion has a vital stake in social relationships and economic policies, and political institutions.

Character is, to a significant extent, determined by the circumstances under which the habit patterns of our lives are formed. The quality of our personal living is largely determined by the character of the forms of self-expression that are available and that become habitual. When the environment that puts its stamp upon men and women is such as to breed lives that are twisted and misshapen—then the Church is recreant to her trust if she does not speak out. Whenever the things that people do, the

relationships that they maintain toward other men and women, and the character of the institutions through which they seek the great goods and supreme values of life, are such as give the lie to the ideals that they profess to cherish, then the preacher, who would prove himself a "man of God," must discover an uncompromising, prophetic voice.

It is quite apparent that most of those who vigorously oppose the "social gospel" today do so out of a rather impressive ignorance of what religion has meant all through the history of the Hebrew-Christian movement. It is clear, from a reading of the literature of the apostolic age, that those who accepted Christ and identified themselves with the Christian Church were required to make a clean break with the institutions and practices of pagan society. One of the primary motives that led Governor Pliny, in the second century, to appeal to the Emperor Trajan for an official ruling, was the degree to which the growth of the Christian community had disrupted the ordinary economic and social institutions of his province. "The world," that in the Johannine literature stands in such sharply defined irreconcilable contrast with the Christian way of life, meant just that, the world. It meant the whole pattern and practice of pagan society. To the Christian in the apostolic age, the ultimate outcome was beyond question. Whether by eschatological intervention, or by processes of social reconstruction within the framework of mundane society, the kingdoms of this world must become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.

This much is clear. There can be no reserved areas, no "No Trespassing" signs set up to bar the way to a radical criticism of all human attitudes, and practices and institutions. If we are to be Christian at all in any sense worthy of the profession that we make, we must be ready and eager to bring every phase of our everyday living under the most searching scrutiny in the light of the ideal and spirit of Jesus. The gospel is concerned, primarily, with the

problem of character building. And for that very reason those who represent the gospel must speak out upon every critical issue that affects the social, economic, and political life of men.

RELIGION FOCUSES IN THE INDIVIDUAL

When we seek the answer to the question, What is it that makes the gospel of Jesus a truly "radical" religion? we shall find it at the point where the individual is at the focus of attention. We might discover fresh light upon our problem if we would recall the main outlines of the ascetic discipline that was developed by the great monastic orders. When a man entered a religious order, he took three vows. They were the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Thus did the keen insight of medieval Christianity diagnose the sources of the evils that beset human nature and devastate human society. We do not need to accept all the details of the solution that the monastic way proposed. But we cannot escape the conviction that they had correctly diagnosed the malady.

Here are our basic human problems. The vow of poverty attempted to deal with greed. At this point the Marxian criticism of capitalistic society was shooting close to the mark. Karl Marx singled out greed as the festering sore out of which the social infection spread to paralyze society. "Love of money is the root of all mischief" (1 Timothy 6. 10). That is the word of the New Testament. We ought not to forget that the apostle placed "covetousness" upon the same level with "idolatry." We, in our time, have been having a good deal to say about the evils flowing from the dominance of "the profit motive" in our modern capitalistic society. We must admit that we have been guilty of no end of muddy thinking and careless speaking upon this point. Most of us need to think through, far more carefully than we yet have done, just what we mean by this phrase that we so glibly bandy about, "the profit motive." I do not wonder that many

earnest, thoughtful laymen are confused and irritated by some of our preaching and writing about this problem. But there can be no doubt that we shall never come to any adequate solution of the economic tensions of contemporary society until we learn how to deal drastically with, and ultimately eliminate from the bases of motivation of both our individual and social behavior, this elemental greed.

The second vow of the ascetic discipline probes another of the festering sores of contemporary life. The vow of chastity attempted a solution of the problem of sex. One does not need to accept the full Freudian analysis of the human mind to recognize how wide are the ramifications of the disorders that beset both individuals and the whole fabric of society, because of our failure to achieve control of this elemental human drive. When we realize the extent of the moral chaos that sex has created, we are not surprised that the monastic leaders were driven to despair and resolved that there was only one solution—the complete renunciation of sex experience.

We understand today, as a result of our study of psychology, far better than they could have known, the danger and the inevitable disaster that lie in wait for those who attempt any ruthless repression of sex. And the more we come to understand the character of this drive of sex, and the extent of its ramifications in determining the character of human behavior, the more we are impressed by the insight of Jesus. He seized the word most intimately associated with the experience of sex, "love," and made it the cardinal word in the gospel that he preached. If we come to understand the way in which the first generation of the followers of Jesus lifted this word "love" out of the cesspools of pagan self-indulgence and made it the very diadem of God, we will discover anew how true it is that the gospel of Jesus has the only saving word for our sex-ridden generation.

The third ascetic vow, the vow of obedience, dealt

directly with the lust of men for power. It is at this point that the Marxian philosophy signally fails in its attempt to diagnose the problem of society. To the Marxian the source of all our troubles is traced to greed. But Marx totally fails to reckon with the lust of men for power. The lust for power, the desire to dominate other men, is the root of even more evil in society than has ever been the lust for things. Down at the bottom of it, the primary reason that men pursue wealth is to possess the power and prestige that wealth commands. We shall have to deal with this lust of men for power before we can claim to be genuinely "radical."

The great Greek dramatists found in what they termed "hybris"—that overweening pride and self-aggrandizement that drove mortals to assume the rights and the prerogatives of the immortal gods—the primary source of human tragedy. It was in the exaltation of the finite to the position of the infinite, in the apotheosis of self, that human beings committed the unpardonable sin. "The essence of sin," said Washington Gladden, "is to set oneself in the center of the universe." Here is the root of the violence and confusion of our time. This is the kernel of the philosophy that lies back of the whole program of Communist and Fascist dictatorship. One cannot escape the conviction, as we observe the development of events in Russia, that it is in this blindness of the Marxian philosophy to the lust of men for power that the Russian experiment has come to grief. This is the spring from which flows forth the inordinate ambition of dictatorship in whatever form it appears. Here is the source of the chaos and violence that today is threatening to destroy civilization. We have undertaken to organize the life of society around a variety of mutually antagonistic, selfish interests. We set one economic group against another, class against class, race against race, nation against nation. We have given the accolade of success to the ruthless and determined individuals, or classes, or nations, that are able to

seize for themselves what they want and hold it against all comers.

This is the focal point of the infection that has spread like a gangrene through the whole body of the religion of our time. We have made "my" comfort, "my" pleasure, "my" profit, "my" convenience, the first consideration in ordering our lives. We do not intend to put ourselves out for anyone or anything. We will ask first, whether belonging to the church will further our economic interests, improve our social standing, or serve our political ambition, before we are ready to decide whether to unite with the church or not. Whenever we raise the question of the value of prayer, the first query that is certain to be made is, "Is prayer answered?" And this means just this—Can I get what I want by asking for it? And, if we discover that we cannot expect to have our demands made good just because they are couched in the language and forms of prayer, we announce forthwith that we are through with religion. We have virtually tried to seize God and make him our servant to run and fetch for us. We shall never find any escape from the confusion and moral anarchy of our secular civilization until we are ready to abdicate our selfishness. Our whole generation needs to find and yield to the Master who is worthy to command.

THE STRATEGY OF THE GOSPEL

Here it is that we come upon the primary strategy of the gospel. The gospel begins by setting God upon the throne of life. There is only one way to deal with selfishness. That is to find an object of loyalty sufficiently commanding to lead us to forget ourselves in devotion to its service. All the lesser loyalties that serve to lead us out of ourselves stop short of ultimate deliverance. Loyalty to friends, loyalty to home, to community, to social class—these only build a barrier of essential selfishness a little way removed from our immediate individual concerns. Even patriotism, as splendid and glorious as it may be, even

patriotism, as Edith Cavell said, just before she faced the German firing squad, "patriotism is not enough." The first commandment of the Decalogue still stands as the foundation, both of morality and of religion: "You shall have no gods but me." "You must love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, with your whole mind, and with your whole strength," is still the first and great commandment. Christianity strikes at the root of the matter by setting life in its true perspective.

In the second place, the gospel directly challenges the whole pagan scheme of values by setting up a cross as the supreme symbol of faith and life. It is not enough to recognize God as the Supreme Sovereign of the soul. The God we worship is a God whose heart has been broken on a cross. "The God who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, surely He will give us everything besides!" (Romans 8. 32.) This is the heart of the Gospel. In the light of the Cross we know that the supreme law of life is the law of sacrifice. It is not he who seizes for himself but he who gives himself who marches in step with the universe.

If the Cross is the first and the last word about God, then we know that there is hope for everyone who has missed the way. We are not helpless puppets caught on the iron wheel of law, to be carried around a dizzy turn or two and then crushed and cast aside. At the heart of the universe is a Spirit of compassionate and redemptive Love. The purpose of God is eternally seeking expression in the redemption of lost lives, in the conservation of human values, and in the re-creation of society. Christianity proposes to strike at the root of the matter, to transform our whole method of approach to the problem of society. It proposes the way of redemptive and sacrificial love. This is God's way. It must become man's way too. It is the way of the Cross.

The third word that the gospel speaks to our time is the word, "fellowship." The first commandment is "You

must love the Lord your God with your whole heart. . . . The second is this: *You must love your neighbor as yourself*" (Mark 12. 30, 31). Here is all the warrant that we need for a gospel that embraces every aspect of the corporate life of men. The point that we are concerned about here is that we shall not become confused about the order of our approach to it. There can be but one primary allegiance for a Christian: "One God and Father of all, who is over us all, who pervades us all, who is within us all" (Ephesians 4. 6). After we have made this primary commitment, the implications of this sovereignty are inescapable: "He who will not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot possibly love the God whom he has never seen" (1 John 4. 20).

It is of the essence of the Christian religion that it binds men into a vital fellowship, and, apart from that fellowship, the spirit of Jesus will starve and die. It is the business of the Church to create the kind of social environment in which Christian character can have a chance to grow. And it is in the creation of this Christian environment, through the fellowship of the Christian community within society, that the Church can make its most significant contribution to the solution of our social and economic problems. It is in the atmosphere of a vital Christian fellowship that men and women can build a purpose, and develop skills in the practice of co-operative living that will prepare them to draw the pattern and fashion the machinery of a co-operative Christian commonwealth.

It is precisely the men and women whose character has been fashioned in the environment of the Christian fellowship, whose ideals have been shaped through the teaching of the Christian community, and who have become accustomed to use the implements of fellowship in attacking the problems that they have had to face, who have the equipment adequate to deal with the larger problems of society. Through this vital Christian fellowship in the

Church, the followers of Jesus can create an atmosphere of mutual appreciation, sympathy, and understanding. They can develop familiarity with, and skills in the use of, the methods of co-operation. They can draw within the Christian fellowship men with diverse social and economic philosophies, impelled by conflicting personal interests, and enable them to discover a common ground of fellowship and co-operation. Through their discovery of one another within the Christian fellowship, they can be brought to discover that, underlying all the superficial areas of conflict, there are fundamental human values concern for which they share. Through a dedication to the search for these common values they may find the way to resolve their present differences in a common program of co-operative action.

We do not shut our eyes to the fact that the Church, in our time, has often grievously sinned at just this point. We have allowed the barriers that cut athwart society to enter and divide the Christian community. But, in the gospel that we cherish and to which, albeit with stammering tongue and faltering speech, we continue to bear our witness, we lift up the principle of our own condemnation and discover the beacon light that points the way to our redemption. The primary human heresy that lurks in the Marxian philosophy is the doctrine of irrepressible conflict that sets one economic class in irreconcilable antagonism to another. The same divisive pluralism runs through and through the political philosophy that underlies the Fascist State. The whole fabric of our society is torn asunder by an endless succession of political factions, ruthlessly struggling for power. The essential radicalism of the gospel of Jesus is again evident in this. The gospel lays the foundation for a Christian fellowship through which this conflict of class and caste and nation can be resolved. In Christ there can be no place for such distinctions as capitalist and Communist, Japanese and Chinese, Oriental and Occidental, Aryan and Jew, Fascist

and Socialist, white man and Negro, but Christ is all and in all.

This, then, it is that makes Christianity a genuinely radical religion. It is the insight of the gospel that focuses primary attention upon the problem of the bases of human motivation. It discovers the elemental issues in the challenge to master the basic human drives of greed and sex and the lust for power. In the insistence upon one absolute sovereignty to which all other human loyalties must be made subordinate, the sovereignty of God alone, the gospel of Jesus lays the indispensable foundation for a reconstruction of life, both of the individual and of society, that will resolve all the divisive conflicts in one coherent unity. In the definition of the character of God and of paramount human values, through the Cross, the gospel speaks a word of hope and the promise of a new day for men today. And, in the Christian fellowship, the gospel undertakes to develop the means by which that hope can be fulfilled and the new world built in which "the *rule* of the world has passed to our *Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever*" (Revelation 11. 15).

IX

THE WORLD IS OUR PARISH

WE may question just how much John Wesley meant by his oft-quoted declaration, "I consider the world as my parish." He was defending, against the objections of a querulous rector, his right to minister to those to whom the regular Anglican clergy had been totally indifferent. Whether he ever thought of putting into this crisp rejoinder all of the world missionary implications that Methodists in after years were to read into it or not, there can be no question that the urge that led him to defy the orders of his own ecclesiastical superiors, and press on in his evangelistic efforts, was a true expression of missionary passion. It is also certain that the followers of Wesley have taken him at his word.

THE WESLEYAN REVIVAL AND THE BEGINNINGS OF THE MODERN FOREIGN MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE

A tabulation of the areas, in which the three Methodist bodies who have united to form The Methodist Church have established missionary stations, includes forty of the major political divisions of the four major continents outside of North America. The plan of organization of world-wide Methodism calls for the operation of at least ten autonomous Central Conferences outside of the United States of America. In addition there are three independent native Methodist Churches that recognize American Methodism as their parentage and maintain close fraternal relations with The Methodist Church. If we include the British Methodists, there is not a major division of the earth's surface upon which the Methodist evangel has not set flaming the beacon lights of the Evangelical Revival. The constituency of The Methodist Church, outside the

United States, includes nearly half a million members in full connection, and nearly as many more probationers.

The Evangelical Revival that gave birth to Methodism was the legitimate parent of the modern Protestant foreign-missionary enterprise. At the opening of the eighteenth century, outside of a small group of Moravian Brethren, there was not a single Protestant foreign missionary in the entire world. The Moravians pioneered, but their efforts were so isolated, so sporadic, so ill-organized, and so poorly supported that, if it had not been for the powerful impact of the Revival, they would almost certainly have proved short-lived.

There had been earlier efforts toward Protestant missionary activity, it is true. Erasmus, the intellectual prophet of the Reformation, had been an enthusiastic advocate of Christian missions. Cromwell, near the end of his life, gave considerable thought to plans for a Protestant mission; but nothing came of it. John Eliot wrote a glowing epic of missionary endeavor early in the history of the colonial period in America, through his efforts to evangelize the Indians of Massachusetts Bay. Within the Anglican communion the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge had been organized in 1698 and the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts in 1701. It took the stimulus of the Evangelical Revival upon the mother Church, however, to galvanize these feeble efforts and give them promise of permanence in the program of the Church.

A mere chronicle of dates tells the story. The year 1738 marked the spiritual awakening of Wesley, and within ten years the Methodist Revival was in full swing from one end of Britain to the other. In 1795 came the organization of the London Missionary Society, in 1796 the Scottish Missionary Society, in 1799 the Church Missionary Society. The same year the Religious Tract Society appeared, while in 1804 came the beginnings of the British and Foreign Bible Society. These evangelical societies

were the spiritual parentage from which sprang the whole Protestant foreign-missionary movement which has encompassed all the lands of earth.

We Methodists can never forget that one of the first results of John Wesley's awakening concern for a more vital personal religious experience was the offering of himself for a foreign-missionary career. His brief term of service in Georgia was not productive of much in the way of tangible results, except as it formed one important step in his own personal pilgrimage of grace. But it indicates how clearly, in his own thinking, missionary interest was linked with vital Christian piety. While he was never able to return to America, his interest in that continent as a field for missionary endeavor continued until the end of his life. George Whitefield, who shares with the Wesleys the glory of lighting the fires of the Evangelical Revival, crossed the Atlantic thirteen times and gave the greater portion of his life to what was essentially missionary service among the American colonies. At the Methodist Conference in Leeds, in 1768, in response to an appeal for help from Thomas Taylor, of New York, John Wesley gave a call for volunteers, and Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor were sent out. Three years later came Francis Asbury. Thomas Coke, the first "General Superintendent" of the rising Methodist society in America, crossed the Atlantic eighteen times and died aboardship in the Indian Ocean, on his way to a missionary career in Ceylon.

We Methodists, here in the United States, as well as beyond the seas, would disown our parentage should we ever lose our zeal for foreign-missionary service. The peculiar pattern of our Methodist polity grew directly out of the essentially missionary character of the Methodist advance across the American continent. The circuit riders were fundamentally missionaries. The rule that was practically universal in the earlier years of Methodist beginnings in America, that only unmarried men could

continue in the itinerant relation, grew out of the fact that they were sent out virtually as missionaries into virgin fields. Over and over, in the records of early Methodist Conferences, these daring adventurous heralds of the gospel of God's free grace received appointments to serve in far-flung circuits in which, as yet, there were no organized societies. They went out, blazing their own trails, and confidently expecting, out of the harvest of their evangel, to gather together the nucleus of societies that would form permanent organizations. The often-quoted quip, that, when the first train on a newly opened railway came puffing into town, there was always a Methodist circuit rider riding on the "cowcatcher," was true in spirit to the record of Methodist itinerancy. As a matter of sober history, the circuit rider had already come into town before the first rails were laid. If Methodists, today and tomorrow, are to be true to the spirit and character of their spiritual fathers, they will be wholeheartedly and enthusiastically missionary-minded Methodists.

MOTIVES AND METHODS OF MODERN MISSIONS

There is no question that the foreign-missionary programs of both Roman Catholic and Protestant, following the discovery and opening up of the Western continents, were highly colored by political and commercial interests. The explorers sent out by Spanish, Portuguese and British governments were given a double commission—to take possession of whatever new lands they might discover in the name of the king who had given them their commission, and to convert to the Christian faith the inhabitants of those lands. In its initial stages, even the African slave trade was justified by troubled Christian consciences on the ground that these human chattels were being taken from a heathen environment and brought under the influences of Christian masters who would bend every effort to win them to the Christian religion. Thus were economic and religious motives mingled in a poison brew that laid

a heavy curse upon society in both the Old World and the New.

Sometimes the representatives of imperialistic expansion and commercial exploitation were in the van with the missionary following swiftly in their train. There is no question that we shall never adequately account for the amazing expansion of the Christian movement within the last three centuries apart from the imperialistic outreach of western Europe toward world dominion. It is always difficult correctly to evaluate all the factors that enter into anything so complex as human society. One of the problems that still baffles students of history is that of accounting for those epochs in which the population of vast areas of the earth becomes subject to violent social ferment and begins to swarm. Unquestionably, one of the major factors in the slowing down of the tempo of missionary advance within the present century, is just the fact that we seem to be living near the term of the last great epoch of swarming populations.

This fact, however, does not provide us with any justification for the conclusion that missionary activity is likely to have no more than a minor place in the program of the Church in the years ahead. Long before the much debated "Laymen's Inquiry" began their study of the modern missionary situation, the Christian Church had begun seriously to appraise the liabilities of a too close entanglement of Christian missions with the economic and commercial imperialism of Europe and America. Today, apart from the program of the Anglican Church, and to some extent that of some of the Lutheran bodies, who, because they continue to be "State churches," are by virtue of that fact inextricably identified with the political policies of the governments that guarantee their support, Protestant Christian Missions have generally cut the strings that linked them to the commercial and political policies of imperialistic governments.

Almost without exception, throughout the Orient,

Protestant missionaries have renounced any claim for protection upon the governments of the nations from which they were sent out. Over and over, during the last generation in China, in which that land has been subject to almost ceaseless political chaos, missionaries have refused to heed the warning sent out by consular officers of their governments, and have chosen to accept whatever risks might be involved and stay with the people to whom they sought to minister. Repeatedly, within the last generation, Christian missionary leaders have appeared among the most severe critics of the political and economic policies of the Western nations.

There has come, likewise, a new attitude toward the non-Christian cultures in the lands to which Christian missionaries go. The older attitude, that discounted every element in the religion and life of pagan people, has given way to an attitude of sympathetic appreciation. Christians of the first centuries of missionary expansion were keenly aware that there were many elements in the culture and civilization of non-Christian people that closely paralleled ideas and ideals approved by Christian teaching. The early Christian apologists found the answer to this problem by ascribing all the virtues in pagan culture to the efforts of the devil to deceive men by specious counterfeits, and so keep them from a discovery of the saving truth. Throughout the earlier years of Protestant missions essentially this same attitude toward the non-Christian cultures dominated the thinking and determined the policies of missionary leaders. There is no doubt that one of the major handicaps, under which Christian missionaries have struggled to win the people of the Orient, has been just this demand that they should discount all the values of their ancient culture, and substitute the alien customs and manners of western European peoples.

The missionary today approaches the thoughtful men and women of India, China, and Japan, first of all with an

effort to understand and to appreciate all that he can discover of value in their culture and faith. Back of this new attitude is the conviction that God "did not leave himself without a witness" in any land or in any generation. Through all of the religions of mankind the unquenchable spiritual hunger of the race has been "seeking after God on the chance of finding him in their groping for him." And through all the forms which religion has taken in the long history of the human race, the Spirit of God has been struggling to find adequate avenues of revelation. We have been learning again the lesson that we should have mastered from the example of the great missionary apostle. When he came to Athens, he looked around for some point of common interest by which he might make his approach to the Athenian people. Discovering an altar dedicated "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD," Paul began his address upon the Areopagus by saying, "I proclaim to you what you [already] worship in your ignorance" (Acts 17. 16-34).

We are moving toward the point at which we can think of these non-Christian religions very much as Paul thought about the Judaism out of which he came to his faith and trust in Jesus Christ. The "law," wrote the apostle to the Galatian Christians, was the "*paidagogos*," the house slave who led the children to school and brought them home again, leading them thus to Christ. And, in his analysis of the function of the Law, he makes it plain that the Law served primarily to stimulate the spiritual hunger of men, a hunger that the Law itself could not satisfy. It was only in Christ that he found ultimate peace and eternal life.

This same function we may regard the non-Christian religions as having fulfilled for the people of the non-Christian lands. Just as the Jewish Law could stimulate religious hungers it could never satisfy, so the great ethnic religions of the non-Christian world, that we know today, have awakened spiritual aspirations for which men and

women can never find complete fulfillment until they come to Jesus Christ. It is quite within the range of possibility that during the next hundred years the Christian world may come to the acceptance of what may virtually become another "Testament" to be placed alongside the Old Testament in the Christian Scriptures. This other Testament might very well contain the finest elements that are found in the great non-Christian religious literatures. We might mention, for example, such writings as *The Bhagavad Ghita*, some of the Vedic Hymns, some of the *Suras* of the Koran, some of the writings of Confucius and fragments of the teaching of Lao Tze. We might raise the question whether such a movement from within the Christian world might not go a long way toward breaking down the barriers that still rise between the Christian and the non-Christian world and open new doors by which our neighbors across the seas might find their way to Christ.

THE INCOMPARABLE CHRIST WE SHARE

This new attitude of sympathetic appreciation of the values which we may discover in the non-Christian religions need not lead us to lose our sense of the incomparable truth which we find in Christ. For our modern day, as for the first Christians who came out of Judaism in the first century, it remains true that "Many were the forms and fashions in which God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these days at the end he has spoken to us by a Son—a Son whom he has appointed heir of the universe." It still remains true that it is only in Christ who "reflecting God's bright glory and stamped with God's own character, sustains the universe" (Hebrews 1. 1-3), that men can find the open door that leads to eternal life.

We do not falter in our witness that "there is no salvation by anyone else" (Acts 4. 12). This statement, from primitive Christian preaching, was not so much a dogmatic affirmation as it was a testimony of first-hand experi-

ence. Never, until they had known Jesus, had those first-century Christians really known what salvation meant. This same grand testimony remains our witness today.

Think of the place that womanhood has occupied universally outside the area of influence of the gospel of Jesus. Think of the outlook for childhood through all the non-Christian lands. Think of the way in which the spirit of Jesus has struck the stony hearts of our human selfishness and brought forth inexhaustible floods of benevolent giving at every announcement of calamity in any part of the earth. Think of the contrast between the harsh brutality and indifference to human suffering that continues to be the spirit of human society untouched by the gospel of Jesus and the sensitivity to human suffering that becomes increasingly the definitive character of a Christ-touched society. Think of the institutions of benevolence—the hospitals, homes, dispensaries, community centers, settlement houses, rescue missions—that spring up in ever-increasing number where the spirit of Christ comes to rule the life of men. Think of the way in which popular education, a recognition of the paramount values of human personality, the spirit and practice of human liberty, have appeared as the fruits of the Christian mission. Think of the new note of joy that breaks forth in the singing and instrumental music of every land touched by the spirit of Jesus. Think of the deeply satisfying experience of God that is typical of Christian experience at its best in contrast with the haunting sense of hunger forever unfulfilled that we find in the thoughtful testimony of those who follow the pagan ways.

There are other factors too, not specifically religious, that we cannot overlook. Mark the course of the rise of science and the application of the findings of science to create the means and provide the implements for a larger life for the masses of men. We cannot escape the conviction that there is a reason that science has made its greatest and most consistent advances in just those areas that

have been most thoroughly impregnated with the teaching of the Christian gospel. Remember how, invariably, a new spirit of hope, of aspiration, a new self-reliance, a spirit of revolt against political and economic systems that shackle the human spirit and thwart the natural aspirations of men, an awakening interest in popular education, the building of schools and colleges, the development of new forms of popular literature—all these phenomena have invariably followed upon the opening of the Christian missionary enterprise. We are not closing our eyes to the dark pages in Christian history. We are not forgetting the intolerance, the bitter persecution, the repression of liberties, the thwarting of efforts for human progress, the blind opposition to scientific advance that we have witnessed in areas controlled by the Christian Church. But, in the main the statement holds. And, when we compare the record of the Christian world with that of lands that have not known the influence of the gospel, the argument amounts practically to a demonstration. We may feel more confident today than ever that "there is no salvation by anyone else, nor even a second Name under heaven appointed for us men and our salvation" (Acts 4. 12).

Our very attitude of sympathetic appreciation has revealed new meanings and possibilities in the missionary enterprise. We see now that, unless we share our Christ with the non-Christian people, the very Christ that we possess will be only a partial Christ, even for us who now claim him as our own. It requires only a casual reading of Christian history to discover that the stream of faith has been enriched, through the centuries, by many tributaries. We rejoice that the apostle Paul stoutly defended the rights of the Gentiles to possess their full share of Christ, and to offer to their fellow Christians, who had come to Christ by way of the Jewish Law, their own characteristic understanding of him. We know that ours would be a pitifully impoverished Christ today if our

fathers had built high, impassable barriers against all the contributions that have come to our common Christian faith from the incomparably rich cultural inheritance of the Greeks, and from the stern rigor of the Roman fiber, and from the restless energies of the Germanic tribes, and from the rigorous discipline of the typically activist Christianity produced upon the American frontier.

So we are confident that we may expect our Christian faith to be immeasurably richer as we learn to appreciate how our Master appears when seen through the eyes of a son of Confucius and a native of Hindustan. Already Christian hymnody has rejoiced in the plaintive melodies and haunting conceptions that have been flowing into the common life of the followers of Jesus on the strains of the Negro spirituals. Already Christians of every nation have found their understanding of the meaning of Jesus immensely quickened by the stimulating writing and challenging living of Kagawa. Already the annals of Christian heroism have been enriched by devoted lives from the shadows of the Himalaya Mountains. It is only as we continue to be wholeheartedly missionary-minded that we can keep open these new windows through which there is certain to come to us fresh understandings of the mind of Christ.

"So you must not boast about men. For all belongs to you; Paul, Apollos, Cephas" (Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, Persian, Arab, African, Malay, Amerindian), "the world, life, death, the present and the future—all belongs to you; and you belong to Christ, and Christ to God" (1 Corinthians 3. 21-23).

WE MUST BE MISSIONARY-MINDED

There is another aspect of the problem of Christian missions that merits our most serious consideration. Students of American history will remember the solemn hour in which Abraham Lincoln electrified the nation with his famous "House divided" address. "A house divided

against itself cannot stand. This nation cannot continue permanently half slave and half free." That which was true of slavery in the United States in the middle of the last century is becoming increasingly true of paganism in the modern world. The world cannot continue permanently part Christian and part pagan. It is certain to become fundamentally all pagan or else it will become increasingly definitely Christian. Either we must win the "kingdoms of this world" for our Lord and for his Christ, or the time will come when there will not be left anywhere in this world any vestige of real Christianity. The issue cannot long be postponed.

Within the last hundred years we have abolished time and annihilated space in our world-wide human neighborhood. The aeroplane has extended "Main Street" to the farthest corners of the earth. The radio has made the whole world one vast whispering gallery. There is now before the human race only one alternative. Either we shall succeed in knitting the various races and nations and peoples into one harmonious world community, or we are certain to destroy what civilization we have been able to achieve in a holocaust of violence. There is only one way by which we can hope to develop a genuine world community. That is by means of a common culture, a common sense of values, a common understanding of the primary objectives of worthy living. That means the world must come to share a common faith.

It is no longer an open option whether we shall be missionary-minded or not. The whole world has become a spiritual battlefield, upon which conflicting missionary agencies are striving for the mind and conscience of the human race. Communism is an aggressive missionary propaganda. The Nazi and Fascist leaders bluntly renounce Christianity and proclaim their purpose to win the whole race to the philosophy of the totalitarian State. These anti-Christian philosophies are pressing the most aggressive kind of evangelistic propaganda they can com-

mand. There is only one answer for this hour. The Christian peoples of the earth must unite in launching a new adventurous campaign for the evangelization of all the non-Christian peoples of the earth. Within the present living generation the issue of the next thousand years of history will be determined. We must dedicate ourselves and all of our resources to the grand objective of sharing Christ with every living soul, and making this new world society that is in the making a genuinely Christian society. As Dr. Adolph Keller wrote, at the close of the Oxford Conference, "It is five minutes to twelve."

X

THE VICTORY THAT HATH OVERCOME THE WORLD

Two things have happened during the past twenty years that have profoundly shaken the faith of many idealistic spirits here in the United States. One was the collapse of the internationalism in behalf of which we ostensibly engaged in the World War. The other was the repeal of Prohibition and the return of the liquor trade to unassailable political power. Twenty years ago, as the Great War came to a close, the greater portion of the idealistically-minded people of America were serenely confident that we were standing on the threshold of a new era. We had girded our strength and gone forth to battle for democracy. We had defeated the autocrats and had toppled kings from their thrones. We had fought a war that was to end war, and we had established a League of Nations by which the disputes between nations were to be adjudicated. We had drawn a new pattern for the kingdom of God and were busily engaged in platting its subdivisions and laying out its parks and avenues. And then, within a good deal less than a generation, the whole house of cards has come tumbling down about our ears. The League of Nations remains only a lifeless skeleton. Brute force and ruthless violence have again taken the center of the stage. More men are under arms today, and the nations are pouring a larger proportion of their current revenues into preparations for further slaughter, than ever before.

A similar debacle has come upon the idealism that provided motivation for the antialcohol crusade. In the midst of the war, with a swiftness that fairly took our breath away, the struggle to outlaw the liquor traffic,

which we had been carrying on in more or less desultory fashion for a good deal more than a generation, moved to an amazing victory. The Eighteenth Amendment to the federal constitution was ratified, and Congress adopted the Volstead Law. All across the nation we began to join in the triumphant chant, "It's in the constitution and it's there, there to stay." And then, even more swiftly than the tide had risen, it ebbed away. The ratification of Repeal came with even greater rapidity than the enactment of Prohibition. And today, the greater portion of a very substantial element in the population who are unalterably opposed to the legalized liquor trade, stand bewildered and helpless, possessed by a sense of the futility of all our efforts to amend the habits of men and the practices of society.

OURS IS AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK

We can understand, perhaps a little better today than we were in the mood to do in the serenely and naïvely optimistic first quarter of this century, the solemn truth which lies back of the vivid imagery of the Epistle: "We have to struggle, not with blood and flesh but with the angelic Rulers, the angelic Authorities, the potentates of the dark present, the spirit-forces of evil in the heavenly sphere." It is a superhuman, an impossible task, to make this world a Christian world.

We do not debate the point. We admit it. When we commit our souls to Christ and undertake, either in our own lives, or in the wider social relationships of the community, to organize our life after the pattern set by Jesus of Nazareth, we immediately find ourselves beset with difficulties. If our purpose is to "build a new world"—a Christlike world, then we must reckon that the present world is definitely our enemy. If all we hope to do is to cherish faith in God and strive to build an individual character that is inspired by the spirit of Jesus, the world, at best, is an indifferent, even an alien world. Christian

ideals and Christian faith simply do not seem to fit into this kind of a world.

When we are honest with ourselves, we have to admit that our human nature possesses many of the marks of the beast. We have impulses and passions and appetites that we with difficulty struggle to control. They are forever slipping the leash of convention, and the precariously maintained habits of obedience to discipline, and running amok. We are selfish, and lustful, and greedy, and cruel. Might has again shaken off the mask of sham submission to the idealism of peace, which it wore for a few years, and asserts its right to rule. It seems inevitable that whenever an ideal runs counter to sheer brute force in this world, force will win the encounter. We know now that we failed at all adequately to reckon with the sinister forces in society that deliberately foment misunderstandings, and fatten upon the exploitation of weaker people and definitely count upon the use of violence to win their ends. We fear that we have not dealt realistically with our human nature. We have hardly known ourselves. In our assumption that men might prefer gentleness and co-operation and peace to ruthlessness and violence and strife, we seem to have been living in a fool's paradise.

The truth is that we are creatures of two worlds. We human beings live in *the world that is* and in *the world that ought to be*. We are possessed of a sensory nervous system whereby we become aware of the character of the world and the society in which we find ourselves. But we are possessed, besides, of an imagination. Through the exercise of our imagination we are forever creating ideals of a far different kind of a world, the world that ought to be. And in the realm of human values the world that is forever must give way before the world that ought to be.

It is at this point that we come to the heart of the function of religion in our lives. Whatever else we are, we are

just as certainly creatures of faith and aspiration as we are of impulse and appetite. If we are the products of this universe, and if we must judge of the character of that universe by the nature of the creatures it has produced, then this is the kind of a world that is forever creating creatures possessed with imagination, creatures who are born to dream and to dare and to aspire. If there seems to be that in our nature that makes us blood brothers of the beasts that perish, there is just as certainly that in our makeup that is forever dissatisfied with low-born desires. There is that which forever reaches toward the sky. We may seem to be the brothers of the beast; but we shall never understand the whole story of our being until we realize that we are born "to become the sons of God."

It is a matter of our faith. Whatever may be the conclusion to which we come about the ultimate character of the universe, it is a matter of faith. We may conclude that there is nothing upon which a man can rely except whatever wits he may possess, whatever skill and knowledge he can acquire, the power of wealth, the influence of friends, whatever advantage the accidents of circumstance may give to him, and his ability to make the most of whatever "breaks" may come his way. We may choose to believe that there is nothing in the whole universe beyond that which we can sense and feel and get hold of with our two hands. But if we do, it will be a judgment of faith, it can never be a reasoned demonstration. So, if we choose, rather, to believe that "the seen is transient, the unseen eternal," it too is a judgment of faith.

That is why religion lies at the heart of the whole problem of living. The whole outcome of our living is determined by the character of our faith. The task is too much for us—alone. Not one of us is ready to face a single day of life—alone. It is an impossible task—alone. We cannot even believe in God—alone. That is precisely what it is that makes the Christian witness a real gospel. It is the "good news" of a God who is out upon the hunt

for men. It is the story of the Good Shepherd, searching for the lost sheep. Religion is more than the record of the groping of men for God; it is the epic saga of the unremitting search of God for men. It is only as we build our life upon this faith that we can ever hope to make life add up to any significant sum of meaning. Apart from faith in God, and commitment of our whole life to God, and the dedication of all our life to fulfill the will of God, there is no hope, either of our mastering ourselves, or winning through to any sense of worth or to any assurance of the security of those values that we cherish. There can be no hope at all of our ever seeing the realization of the ideals to which we dedicate our lives.

WE FIND OURSELVES AS WE LOSE OURSELVES IN GOD

"Thou hast made us for thyself, O God, and our souls are ever restless until they find their rest in thee." So wrote the great Augustine. And so each generation joins to add its witness, "Apart from me you can do nothing."

The gospel is like an ellipse that swings around two foci. They are the incarnation and the Cross. Our faith is rooted in the conviction that God found the only adequate revelation of himself in the human living of Jesus of Nazareth. It is not in the immeasurable magnitudes of the interstellar spaces; it is not in the vast impersonality of material mechanisms; it is not in chemical formulae, nor in mathematical relationships, nor in geologic history, that we find the most revealing clue to the character of God. We find that only when we behold the incomparable splendor of the human living of Jesus. Here we contemplate a mystery that staggers our imagination and impoverishes the limited resources of human speech. We know that Jesus lived a completely human life. There is no hope for us poor lost human men and women otherwise. But we know too that "it was in him that the divine Fullness willed to settle without limit" (Colossians 1. 19).

That is the source of our hope. Our human living, our

hunger, our yearning, our aspiration, the values that we cherish, the objects to which we give ourselves in order to make life seem worth while living, the dreams we dream, the hopes that light up the darkness of our discouragement—these are not mere accidents. They are at least the dim reflections of the glory and splendor of God. God cares! That changes the whole horizon of our days. The outcome of our human venture matters to God. It is possible for a man to grasp at least a dim shadow of an understanding of the business to which God gives himself. And a man can become a fellow workman with the eternal God. That gives life a sense of unimpeachable worth and dignity. That lifts us out of the vast anonymity of the immense impersonality of things. Every man, no matter what his station, or how circumscribed his situation, counts one with God. "The very hairs on your head are all numbered."

This gospel of a God who cares becomes dynamic in the Cross. The fearful load which we find it impossible to lift, that rests down upon the shoulders of God. The tragedies that overwhelm us, they break upon his head too. The malignant evil that threatens to crush and to destroy us, that has already broken the heart of God. It has broken his heart; but it has not swerved him from his purpose. And it has not stayed his steps. In the Cross we see that the massed, malignant evil of this world has done its worst. And after it has done its worst, the beauty of the life that was nailed upon the Cross remains unmarred. And the life remains. Nay, rather, the life that was hung upon the Cross becomes transfigured, glorified. The Cross that was aimed at its frustration becomes the very instrument of its triumph. Having once looked upon "that strange Man upon his cross" we shall never more surrender to our doubts. We know that, even though force may win the first encounter, in the long last, the ideal, the faith we cherish, the vision of that which ought to be, will win the last engagement.

The old catechism carried the statement in language somewhat foreign to our habits of contemporary speech: "The chief end of man is to obey God and to enjoy him forever." No truer word was ever spoken. Every creature that we may discover in all the bewildering varieties of living forms comes nearest to perfection when it comes nearest becoming what its nature intended it to be. A rose fulfills itself in the perfection of fragrance and color and contour of a rose. The perfection of an ear of corn is measured by the degree to which each kernel on the cob fills out with the rich succulent sap that comes welling up through root and stem and shoot and marches in perfect alignment with the other kernels on the ear. And a man becomes most nearly the perfect human as he approximates most closely the Divine. This is the dream that is eternally set within the human soul: "Then said God, 'Let us make man in our own likeness, to resemble us, with mastery'" (Genesis 1. 26), over all the forces and forms that make up his natural environment. This it is that gives worth and dignity to human living: not the intensity of his capacity for emotional excitement; not his ability to satisfy the elemental appetites of his physical being; not the degree of his success in imposing his own individual caprice upon his fellows—but his ability to make his life an instrument through which the varied forms and forces of life around him are disciplined and used to work out the plans of God. We truly find ourselves to the degree to which we lose ourselves in God.

GOD WORKS THROUGH US

The converse of this statement also is true. As surely as we find ourselves in God, God reveals himself and works out his purposes through us. This is the clue to the explanation of the unique position which the Bible has come to occupy in our faith and experience. Here is a volume that bears upon its face all the evidence of having come to us through human hands. We know the names

and some portions of the life history of some of the authors whose work it represents. We know a good deal about the historical background and the social situation that are reflected by the various portions of the book. We find on every page unmistakable indications of the human limitations and imperfections of the men and women from whose minds and pens its pages have come to us. On the other hand, here is a book that has come to represent in our thinking the very "Word" of God. It is a volume that has been cherished with a reverence accorded to few, if any, other collections of literature that the race possesses. It is a volume whose slightest word has often been quoted as the final authority to settle the most solemn questions men can raise. To quote a text of scripture has meant, for the great majority of our spiritual fathers, the equivalent to saying, "Thus speaks the voice of God."

We do not need to enter, here, into the interminable arguments in which we have often indulged, in our efforts to account for the unique reverence which men have accorded this body of literature. It is sufficient to observe that, if God is ever going to speak to men in a form that the average man and woman can understand, he will have to speak through the medium of human lips. If there is to be a written message from God to men, it will have to be written by a human pen. It is just as men have brooded over those dark and troublesome questions that are forever welling up out of the unfathomed depths of our human souls, until their spirits have caught fire in some moment of illumined insight, and then have sought to share this new understanding that they have won with their neighbors, that God has made himself known in ever clearer measure to men and women. We say the Bible is the Word of God because through its pages God speaks to us in a way that we find him speaking through no other literature. This is just the reason that this book has lived. When we know something about the history of

how the Bible grew, it becomes an ever-growing wonder that it has survived at all. The various portions that now make up the book were written under a wide variety of circumstances and were cast out to serve some immediately pressing purpose, with never a thought that they would one day form a part of such a volume as our Bible. And they were cherished just because the people into whose hands they came, found them of such priceless value to them, they spoke so surely to their hearts for God, they would not let them die. The Bible is the Word of God because, through the tremendously significant living that lies back of the written page, and through the understanding by which that living was defined in a written Word, God speaks to us today. And still, in the Bible, he speaks through the lives and lips of men and women like ourselves. We have already remarked that the apostle spoke of the Church as the "body of Christ." It is the instrument and agency through which our Lord is now seeking to work out his will among men. It is the Church that has cherished the Scriptures through all the years. Through the ministry of the Church we were first introduced to the Bible, and through the Church we have been guided in our understanding and interpretation of its meaning for us. It is the Church that has taught us and is teaching our children, if they are being taught at all, the meaning of Christian living. The Church has ever and again awakened and nourished and sent out from her bosom those pioneer souls who have sought to wrestle with the giant demons of evil in the world. Even though at times she has not recognized them for her sons; even though she has disowned them, until, too late, she has sought to add her tribute of praise to grace their memory; even though they themselves have turned against the Church in their dismay at her seeming indifference or hostility; it has still been true that it has been through the very teaching and preaching ministry of the Church, and through the ideas and ideals that she has kept alive, that they have been inspired.

We have had no little fault to find with the Church. It has been easy for us to forget that the Church is made up of very human men and women. It is easy for us to forget that the real Church is just a fellowship of living men and women. That is the only way in which God *can* work in this human world. He has to work through us.

Some years ago we heard Bishop Francis J. McConnell preach upon that most bitterly fought-over battleground of all the areas of combat in textual exposition, the saying of Jesus to Peter, "On this rock I will build my church." The bishop offered an interpretation rather sharply at variance to most of the common ways of construing this text. The meaning, as he saw it, was simply this: Jesus said to Simon, "You are the building material out of which I must build my Church." No one knew better than did Jesus the weak spots in the character of Simon. It is easy for anyone to find many flaws in every one of the disciples. It is easy enough to find any number of things wrong with the men and women who make up the Church of Christ today. But, if there is to be any Church, it will have to be built out of the men and women that are here at hand. It does not get us anywhere to stand off and excuse our holding aloof by pointing to the failures and shortcomings of the Church. It will not help us forward to sit and wait for some ideal perfect Church to appear. Life will not wait. The days march on. If God is to get forward with the work that must be done today, he will have to use the human material that he can command. And the perennially repeated miracle of every generation is that, taking this common, imperfect human material, God has been able to keep moving on toward the goal of the consummation of his will.

Our trust is in God. This is our hope and our salvation. We find our understanding of the character of God, and our personal experience of his presence in our lives, nourished and strengthened through our use of the Scriptures and through our fellowship in the Church. It is as we

link our lives with the lives of others who have a common mind and purpose in the common experience of worship and comradeship in common tasks that our faith is strengthened and our hope renewed. In the dedication of our lives to serve the high and holy purposes of God we enter into a divine-human comradeship that crowns our living with a sense of splendor and worth. We Methodists have started to build a new Church. The work was not finished with the adjournment of the Uniting Conference. It takes generations and centuries to build a church. We have only drawn up some of the plans and blueprints by which to build. We, the men and women who make up this goodly fellowship, we are the material out of which the structure shall be built. As we face the tasks of God that lie before us, as we draw stronger the bonds of the fellowship that unite us, as we share in the quest for God and help one another forward into a more significant realization of the presence of God in our common worship, as we unite in the sharing of our mind and of our experience to seek a clearer understanding of God's mind and will for us, we shall "like living stones . . . be built into a spiritual house." So shall we build The Methodist Church.

QUESTIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR STUDY

THESE chapters were written as a guide for study and discussion groups. In order to secure the best results each member of the group should have a copy to read and mark and study. The chapters are intended to be suggestive, and the class sessions should be given over largely to discussion of questions that arise naturally out of the subject of the chapter, and out of a parallel study of the *Doctrines and Discipline of The Methodist Church*. One of the objects which the leader should keep in mind is to familiarize the members of the group with the structure and organization of The Methodist Church. In addition, out of the study and discussion of the themes suggested, there ought to come a fresh understanding of the faith that we profess and the character of the program which the Church should carry on.

The quotations from the Bible which appear at various points in the text are, except where otherwise indicated, taken from *The Bible, A New Translation*, by Dr. James Moffatt, of which Harper & Brothers are the distributors in the United States.

The following suggestions are offered of ways in which the study may be directed most profitably.

CHAPTER I. THE FRUIT OF THE EVANGELICAL REVIVAL

Have some member of the group ready to report briefly on the life of John Wesley and the results of the Evangelical Revival on English society.

Someone else might trace, in detail, the elements in our polity and practice that are derived directly from early Methodism.

Someone else should report on the program of lay activities proposed in the *Discipline*.

The leader should allow plenty of time to discuss the question of the degree to which we find Methodism today reflecting the emphases suggested as characteristic of our heritage.

CHAPTER II. WE ARE ONE PEOPLE

Have someone ready to report on the influence of frontier society on the development of Methodist polity.

It might be profitable to have the group discuss the adequacy of the early Methodist definition of the function of the Church "to reform the continent and spread scriptural holiness across the land."

Have someone ready to report on the differences in the polity of the three Churches that united to form The Methodist Church, and the way in which the new Church incorporated essential elements from the constitution and practice of all three.

Another profitable subject for discussion would be the relative elements of centralized authority and democratic procedure in the government of The Methodist Church.

Have someone contrast the Methodist system of appointments with the method of calling ministers employed by congregational bodies.

Have someone ready to report particularly upon the organization of the Church outside the United States.

CHAPTER III. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

Assign someone to report on the changes that becoming a Christian have brought to people in China and India.

Suggest a general discussion of the question why so many people seem indifferent to their obligations to the church.

Have someone report on the question, Are there any noticeable differences between those who are members of the church and those who are not?

CHAPTER IV. A VITAL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Assign someone to report on the question, Why do members of the church give lodges, clubs, and other interests precedence over the church in their lives?

Have a report on the proportion of the membership of the church who are contributing to the local budget and to

world service. How many are regularly attending some service of the church?

Ask each member of the group to state why they belong to the church, and why they attend.

Have someone report specifically on the number of social agencies in the community that are making some contribution toward the objectives listed as the function of the church.

CHAPTER V. "TRAIN FOR THE RELIGIOUS LIFE"

Ask each member of the group to report upon his personal habits of cultivating personal religion.

Have someone report upon the extent to which families in the church are observing some form of family worship.

Have someone bring in a list of books that might be recommended as helpful to cultivate personal religion.

Have someone report on the relative amounts that the American people are spending for amusements, for liquor, for automobiles, and for the Church.

CHAPTER VI. WE MUST EVANGELIZE

Have someone report in detail what has been the evangelistic program of the church during the past ten years. What about results?

Have a report on the proportion of the population of the community that are members or regular attendants at some church. Compare the number of members with the number listed as constituents of your church.

Suggest that the group prepare recommendations to the Official Board for a plan of evangelism for the church.

CHAPTER VII. OUR TEACHING TASK

Have someone report on the character and method of organization of the educational program outlined in the *Discipline*.

Have another describe the educational program in operation in your church.

Have another describe in detail the program of young people's work in the church.

Have someone report on the church-related colleges and

Wesley Foundations that are serving young people from your church.

Have another locate and describe briefly the theological schools of the Church.

CHAPTER VIII. RADICAL RELIGION

Have someone report on the prevailing attitude within your church toward the "social gospel." Discuss the basis for it.

Have someone report on the way the monastic orders worked out the problem of the discipline and remaking of character.

Ask someone else to analyze the prevailing moral and spiritual problems of contemporary life in terms of the three basic sources of evil indicated in the monastic discipline.

Have another analyze the life of the local church in terms of the three items suggested in the strategy of the gospel. How far have we succeeded in developing a *Christian Church*?

CHAPTER IX. THE WORLD IS OUR PARISH

Ask someone to report on the extent of the missionary program of The Methodist Church.

Have another report on the plan of organization of missionary activity in the Church.

Have another report in detail just what your local church is doing in missionary activity.

Ask someone to discuss the question, Why are not more members of the church interested in missions?

Have another report on political and economic changes in the non-Christian world that have affected the missionary program of the Church.

Ask someone to be ready with the best argument he can work out on behalf of missions.

CHAPTER X. THE VICTORY THAT HATH OVERCOME THE WORLD

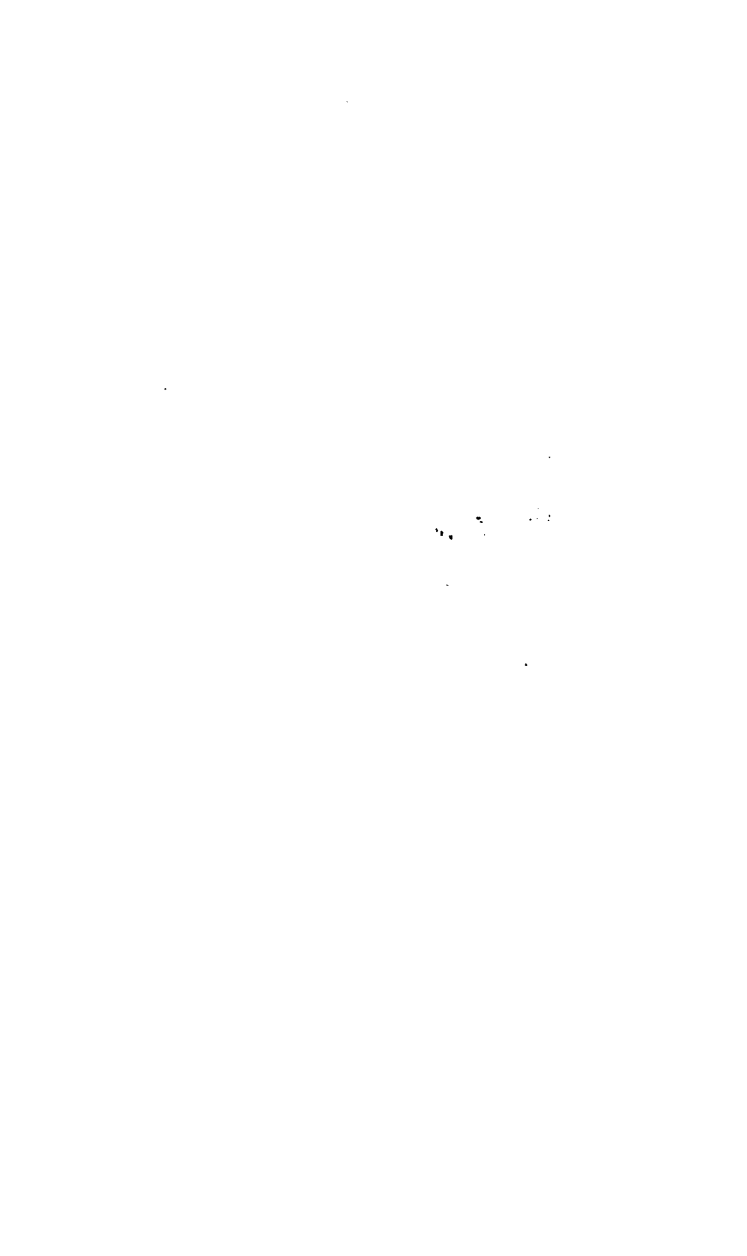
Ask someone to report on the prevailing attitude of your community toward the possibility of preventing war.

Ask another to report on the attitude of the community toward the liquor traffic.

Have someone else report upon the question, How many people in the church have a vital sense of God and act upon the basis of that sense?

Have another appraise the results of the work of the church in your community over the past ten years. Have you made progress?

As supplementary reading, the Aldersgate Edition and the Uniting Conference editions of the *Christian Advocates* carried a good deal of valuable information. Professor Garver's, *The Methodists Are One People*, gives a splendid, readable account of the division and reunion of Methodism. The *Disciplines* of the three Churches forming the union will be useful for comparison.



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